



Surviving a Harsh Fantasy with Cheat Items

Kokugensou wo Item Cheat de Ikinuku

Arc 1 - The Rise of the Entrepreneur

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Chapter 1: Prologue

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaa, I will die, I’m seriously going to dieeeeeeeee!”

It sounds like I’m making an excuse out of nowhere, but, I was attacked by a pack of stray dogs outside a village.

Originally, I planned to fight.

However, I’ve already tossed my sword aside and am now running away desperately.

To be more precise, they weren’t stray dogs, but seemed to be more like those monsters, called ‘crazy dogs(1)’.

I thought that maybe mad dogs would be a good comparison to these ones here, but, they were far more enormous than what I had imagined as normal dogs. My legs began to tremble as soon as I saw drool dribbling from their bared fangs and their glaring eyes filled with madness.

Dogs usually tend to gather in packs.

There were probably 4 of them. Back when I accepted a request from the guild of adventurers in this village, I thought there was no way for an armored person to lose against mere dogs.

I made light of this fantasy world.

Being surrounded, I was about to be eaten alive by those guys.

The moment I thought about various things awaiting me next, I lost my will to fight.

“Aahhhhh!”

I was prepared for the worst as I knew one of them had aimed for my ankle from behind me, but, for some reason, I didn’t feel anything.

My heart was palpitating so much I thought it would burst. I tried to grasp the situation while being awfully calm.

To my luck, the wound wasn't that deep, as the dog had to bite through my thickly-made trousers.

More importantly, the real problem was that its sunken fangs wouldn't separate from me.

Even if I was to dash away, like a startled hare, while dragging that mad dog along, it would still hinder my movements.

Like that, I threw myself forward, leapt in the air, and tumbled.

Gently falling down onto the ground, I rolled heavily forward while feeling the soil in front of me.

At that time, I understood I was going to die for sure.

I've seen somewhere a movie where a certain guy dies in slow motion. I think the same is happening to me right now.

However, this was a real occurrence and not just a scene from that movie.

Don! – My body hit against the ground.

Lying sprawled out and face up, what I saw next were flashing memories of my life till now. I was carelessly thinking about various things from that time.

I was betrayed by my own expectations.

The mad dog jumped onto the top of my chest with a bang and I could feel its weight.

Even though it didn't hurt back when I was bitten, it felt incredibly painful and heavy when a crazy dog sprang up on top of my chest.

Preparing to devour my head, the mad dog opened its big jaw at me.

The inside of its jaw was bright red and there were white, sharp fangs lining the interior.

Ah, there are cavities in this guy's molars.

What one should see before death was probably not a dog's cavities.

Thinking that you ought to remember at least your sweetheart's face (which I don't have), I gave up and closed my eyes.

I couldn't watch myself being devoured by a dog.

—slash

Together with the sound of something falling down with a thud, the weight of the dog disappeared.

Ahhh, have I already died?

Apparently, death doesn't hurt if you don't detest it much.

As expected from a fantasy world.

I wonder if a 'game over' screen will appear after this. Still, I couldn't care less about that.

That's because writhing in pain and dying after being bitten to death by a pack of dogs wasn't just some joke.

I'm thankful that it wasn't.....

With my eyes closed, I realized my ankle began to tingle in pain.

Speaking of which, it damn hurtsssss!

Not being able to endure the violent pain running through my ankle, I opened

my eyes.

Ahh, the sky is blue.

I was still alive and laying on the ground face up.

While being attentive to my much hurting ankle, I slowly raised my body up. There was a sea of blood around me. The scene looked like it came straight out of a splatter movie.

“What’s this? Is it my blood?”

That can’t be true. The blood was spilling out from the dead bodies of the dogs, which were gruesomely slashed.

It was their blood.

The dog that had pounced on top of me and tried to bite my head off had its own head split by a knife, from which pink-colored brain matter was seeping out.

And then, a bit further away from me, I found a warrior girl, who was thrusting her somewhat large sword into the remaining dog that had completely surrendered.

Kyuuuun – an awfully small shriek reverberated from that dog.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, well.... I guess somehow.”

It was a lightly armored warrior girl who wore a thick, leather-made jacket and a black Farstian (a garment similar to those thick, cotton-made, cheap jeans). For warriors, this was considered light equipment, but, it was probably crucial for them to be able to move with ease. Her sword was a straight one

with a rustic design and a dully radiating light. Judging from how effortlessly she swings it, I could easily understand this girl is strong.

Her vivid, crimson hair that stretches till her shoulders was coarsely bundled up in a ponytail while swaying from a high position. Despite being a girl, she has a large build. Her tempered body is slim, just like the blade of a naked sword, making her style look great.

It's clear her facial lines are that of a westerner, which for a Japanese, like me, is beautiful. Is she in her mid-twenties?

Had I been some beautiful onee-san, I would've probably become imperious.

However, it would apply if it wasn't for her face and body stained with spurts of blood from the slain dogs, and the patterned cloth of her drawn sword which she held in her hand.

I know it's rude to say this after being saved, but, that gruesome appearance of her looks even more scary than that of those crazy dogs.

"Can you stand?"

"I'm fine..... ow."

No good, my ankle, which got bit, still hurts like hell.

I was also wearing Farstian-like trousers, which I bought from one of the shops in town, but, a part of it was ripped apart with blood running down from the top.

The wound was quite deep and it wouldn't stop. Just from looking at it, I felt unwell.

"I can provide you with a light treatment, but...."

"Umm, do you have a recovery potion with you?"

I, who was already weakened, made such an immodest request.

The expression on the Onee-san's face turned stern.

"I don't have any, but, do you know how much a single potion like that costs?"

"Umm....."

Was there anyone in that village selling recovery potions?

I went to a second-hand shop in the village and sold tools which I happened to carry with me. I used the money I got from that to equip myself.

Then, I took over my first job from that guild for adventurers (that functions as bar and an inn too) and came here without realizing there was a market where you could buy recovery potions.

"No matter where you buy the potion, it will cost at least a silver coin. You said you accepted a quest in that bar, but, how much was it worth?"

"Ummm, it was 5 big copper coins."

A single silver coin is worth 5 big copper coins.

I could understand what this Onee-san was trying to convey.

That is to say, I will go broke if I buy that potion.

Even a modern Japanese, like me, knows how important money is.

I, who sustained an injury serious enough to immobilize me, was in no place to ask anyone to hand me a recovery potion just like that.

The fact that I was rescued from almost certain death is the proof of my weak social status.

“It’s fine as long you understand. Now drink this quickly.”

The Warrior Onee-san took out a blue vial from her rucksack, which seemed like it had been thrown away in a battle, and passed it to me.

“Are you okay with that?”

“You probably won’t be moving anywhere with that leg. In exchange, I’ll take the reward from your quest. Also, if we sell the hide and meat from those dogs, we won’t go into the red.”

Saying so, the Onee-san took out her knife and calmly proceeded to dismantle the dead dogs.

I, on the other hand, drank the blue vial.

Its taste was a bit bitter, but I could feel its effect spreading throughout my body.

My torn off trousers wouldn’t be repaired, but the wound on my ankle almost closed up.

I’m saved – I sighed with relief.

Still, after seeing how the Onee-san cut the dogs’ stomachs and took out their still warm organs, I gradually fell into despair.

This is a cruel real fantasy world.

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I, who was supposed to be a regular high schooler, was sent to a European-styled village before I realized it.

A short time ago, after looking at the unfamiliar fronts of the houses in this village, I somehow came to realize I wasn't teleported to Europe, but to a different fantasy world.

At that time, I felt a highly positive feeling gushing inside of me, similar to that of a chest burning hot.

The chance for me to become a hero in a different world has finally arrived! – Is what I thought when I jumped for joy and went to kill some monsters while being in high spirits.

However, the result of me swinging my sword at monsters turned out like this.

A crypto-otaku high schooler, like me, was a bit knowledgeable regarding stories that involved phantasm.

For instance, I'm reading this old book that I have with me. I've properly study things about summoning, reincarnation, and transition, without distinguishing any of them. Recently, I've been fond of different world summonings as well.

I can make free use of the knowledge from those light novels and judge the situation accordingly.

This world is neither a game or a simple fantasy world, but a real fantasy world based on old books!

As long as this is a real fantasy world, I should be able to make use of the crazy dogs' hide and meat, which the Onee-san had killed in a blink of an eye.

Still, the sea of blood that is unfolding before my eyes, the internal organs taken out and the skinned corpses of the dogs, looks grotesque.

In other words, you can't expect things like an easy system of leveling, convenient magic, cheats at the player's disposal, and a support characteristic

that is found in simple fantasy worlds.

Rather, if you're careless, you might die before realizing it.

This is a harsh world.

Not to mention, when you die, it hurts like hell.

Thinking back on the terrific pain, which I got from that huge dog just now, I'd rather not have the same experience twice.

My stomach has already started to growl. I want go back as soon as possible....

"If you have the time to spare, can you help me with gathering firewood?"

The Onee-san asked me who was reluctant in helping her in dismantling the animals.

To be honest, gathering firewood is much more enjoyable than staring at this grotesque scene of dismantling.

"Sigh, seriously what should I do.....?"

Complaining and grumbling, I held my head in my hands, which had been gathering dry wood.

A with-it youngster like me has no power to survive in these turbulent times.

Just a moment ago, I went my own way and mistook myself for being some sort of hero summoned to a different world.

Far from being able to kill a monster, I don't even possess the knowledge and experience needed to process those corpses into meat and hides.

“Speaking of which, those internal organs are probably way too grotesque for me. That’s impossible.”

There was not a single depiction of that in the light novels I had read.

Certainly, if memory serves me, there was a maniacal game in which I could dismantle animals.

But it was only cutting their intestines.

Maybe, if a layman like me was to practice, then perhaps, I would be able to do it.

However, scientific and intuitive dismantling methods are totally different things.

If a modern kid, like me, was able to completely process a body, then I’d be considered on par with those at a superior level.

If I possessed such skills for survival, I would, by no means, choose to be an adventurer or a hunter.

Does she understand the feelings of someone like me?

The warrior Onee-san took the gathered firewood from me and started to cook a dog’s internal organs in a frying pan, happily.

“You can eat this meat afterwards as well. We can also make them into dried meat, but, as for the liver, you should only eat them when going on a hunt. Delicious!”

“Yes....”

I was encouraged to eat some dog’s internal organs.

Indeed, the sizzling sound of the cooking meat stirred up my appetite. There

was also the burnt fragrance of delicious looking fat.

I gave it a try and bit the steamy thing served on my wooden plate with all my might.

“Delicious.....”

“Right?! There’s still plenty left, so eat, eat.”

I used to have an image of liver as something associated with bitterness, but it seems like I was totally wrong.

Rather, it felt sweet on my tongue. This could simply be described as being delicious.

Even though the offal of this fresh crazy dog was soft, it had an appropriate food consistency. The rich taste of its fat went smoothly through my throat, which made me eat to my heart’s content.

I’ve heard stories about meat being more preferably sold as dried food, but, being able to eat like this, this one here is incredibly delicious and rich in protein too.

As we encompassed the burning firewood and ate together, I was able to befriend and hold a natural conversation with this Onee-san.

Her name is Louise Carlson.

The name of Louise seems to be quite popular in this area, called Silesia.

If I was to use Japan as a comparison, wouldn’t it be Hanako? Right now, there are no people named like that here, but, that’s because this is a medieval fantasy world.

As one would expect, Louise's main occupation is that of a female warrior. She uses her straight sword, but, she's generally skilled in everything, and even seems to be able to fight on a horse. While we're at it, she's 24 years old.

Since I'm 17, I guess that makes her 7 years older than me?

"I guess so....."

"What are you guessing to?"

I ran my mouth without thinking ahead. Well, even if I did, there's no use in thinking back on it.

Now, it wasn't the right time to speak one's mind unreservedly and be infatuated by her.

That's right, I haven't introduced myself yet.

My name is Sawatari Takeru. I'm a 2nd year high schooler.

"That Hi-gh Schooler, what kind of profession is that?"

"Ummm, I wonder about that, you see....."

A school title was probably not common in this Kingdom of Silesia.

In that case, wouldn't I be an unemployed? Perhaps, an unemployed NEET....?

Since becoming my ideal magic sword hero doesn't seem to be possible, I need to find some job that's appropriate for me.

It looks like Louise has been following me from when I accepted the quest in the guild, because I seemed to be very frantic.

That's right, now that I think back, I was certainly in a hysterical state after

being transported here.

And now, I've changed completely from being crazy to being depressed.

Despite Louise's unsociable appearance, she was actually a kind person. When I asked her if she knew any jobs appropriate for me, I was told that being just an adventurer was no good.

"With your skills right now, you'll die before gaining any experience."

"I see...."

It's just like Louise-sama says, I guess.

"Your swordsmanship a bit eccentric, but, rational. That's why I was hesitating to help you, since I didn't know if you could fight."

"Ah-, I see"

My swordsmanship is that of the North star ittou-ryuu style(2).

Despite saying so, I didn't practice Kendo during high school. Instead, I was part of the go-home club.

Once I quickly returned back home after school, I would use the surplus of my time to read about old style swordsmanship and practice using a bamboo sword.

I was fond of Musashi Miyamoto, so I aspired to become a fine swordsman. What's more, I also read various Olympic books.

I'm one those so-called chuunibyou guys. Despite me being already a high schooler, being a chuuni is quite weird, isn't? Yeah, you can laugh at me. After

all, this is something to laugh about, right?

However, I cannot laugh at my current situation.

Otherwise, I'll die on the battlefield for being half-hearted.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, is what they say.

I'm weak.

In addition to this place's culture still developing and its bad public safety, I am forced to survive in this cruel world with its violent monsters.

Ah, somehow I've become gloomy again.

Anyway, I'm going to eat to my heart's content, since this dog's organs are tasty.

And then, I helped Louise with transportation of the hides and meat to the village. Once I did so, I expressed my deepest gratitude to her, and even sat in dogeza style, so as to have her find a job for me through the good connections of her friends.

One day has passed since I fell into this world.

I was arrogant to think I could become a hero reincarnated in a different world.

I was also naive to think that a death here would result in a 'game over' screen appearing.

I would have disappeared the moment I was about to be killed by those crazy dogs.

Nevertheless, I don't want to die, I want to live though no matter what.

This is what I strongly wished for.

The mad dogs, which tried to kill me, were further slaughtered by the stronger Louise, processed into delicious meat and preserved as a life provision.

I, must live on in this cruel world, where the weak are meat and the strong do eat.

1: Written as 'Crazy Dog' in katakana.

2: One-sword schools. For more detail:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Itt%C5%8D-ry%C5%AB>

Chapter 2 – The Discovery of a Cheat Skill?

It's been 1 week since I was teleported from the modern Japan to Roscoe, a remote countryside located in the Kingdom of Silesia.

I've already become completely discouraged.

“Arhh! For Christ's sake, why is there no running water!?”

I was regularly transporting well water to a certain farmer's barn.

My job right now is taking care of cattle, which are a common replacement for farming tools in these medieval times.

Once I finished drawing water, I proceeded to feeding them next.

I filled a manger with plenty of dried leaves.

“Mooo” – making such a sound, the cattle seemed to be pleased.

I thought they were kind of cute, but I had no time to ponder about that because of my demanding labor.

That's why, I'm telling you not to lick me.

I do like meat, but I'd rather not be the one licked by it.

“Haaah..... Good grief.”

It was one hard work after another.

And muscle pain after muscle pain.

I was hired by a family of farmers who live in this household, thanks to Louise's mediation.

As long it's something like helping a farming family, even I can do it. I was thankful to Louise for that.

Still, even though I was supposed to be hired as a farmer, why was I forced to do a job similar to that of a dairy farmer?

Oh right. To begin with, I didn't plan to become either a farmer or a dairy farmer.

What I wanted to become was a magic sword wielding hero!

I think, I should already give up on that idea, but still....

I thought I'd become accustomed to demanding physical labor if I continued to work like this, but, I guess it won't happen. My muscular pain is piling up one after another. No matter how much time passes, it won't change for better.

The amount of work I had to do wouldn't let me recover in time, and there was no work regulation department.

"We still haven't entered the busy farming season." – I got the owner of this farm to say that, which made me look like a person with a lot of spare time.

The reason why it's hard for me to complain is because the head of this farming family, his wife, and even their small daughter are working harder than me.

In a medieval times fantasy world, even water drawing and wood-chopping are incredibly hard.

Naturally, instead of modern science, there exist magic in this world filled with swords and magic.

However, the ones who are able to use it are particular people called magicians. Even if they didn't make their names as adventurers, it seemed they would generally serve some royal family or work as a government official of some kingdom.

Later on, they could also become priests capable of using holy magic. Indeed, those people are quite influential, aren't they?

In other words, the life of a common plebeian with no magic has remained unchanged since long ago.

Judging from the point of view of a modern kid, like me, even those who live their daily life without magic possess a strength, which makes them look like they're holding a cheat skill.

What should I do once it becomes hectic during that aforementioned farming season?

Perhaps, my arms will fall off, I guess.

"Argh!! I don't want to do this any longer."

I laid myself on top of some dried grass.

The dried grass had no bugs, which is usually an unavoidable part of it. Therefore, it was hygienic and pleasant. I could sleep like this, endlessly.

And then, would I be dismissed for skipping out on my job, even as a farmer? Even though I survived and was saved from those crazy dogs.

"It won't do if I give up. I have to live on."

I raised my body up from the dried grass and roused myself.

Picking up a thin stick of firewood, I began to draw up a plan on the ground's surface.

I was in a situation with no paper and pen, but, rather than grumbling to myself, writing like this made it much easier for me to gather my thoughts.

For example, instead of grieving over the lack of running water, how about I make it myself?

No, with my unskillful fingers, making something to produce running water will be tough, but, I can also suggest that idea to someone who can make it.

Since there's also a water wheel used for grinding powder at the river nearby, can't I use the pure energy from its dynamic force to draw water with a pump?

Even if it was going to have to be a water well with no dynamic force, I could still easily draw water as long as I had a hand powered pump.

Thinking it wasn't related to social science, I told myself to cut it out and focus more on improving things, like my cooking skills.

But, I still need that.... and this.... – While I was worrying, a certain blond girl came into my view.

“Ah—, Takeru is idling again.”

“No no, I've been just thinking about something for a little bit.”

This girl is Sara-chan. She's the daughter of this family of farmers.

Sara-chan wasn't that much of a special beauty, but, her blond hair and small posture were cute, which made her the no.2 feast for my eyes.

(While we're at it, the no. 1 feast for my eyes is Louise. She's indeed a no.1 with a rare appearance in these times.)

Sara-chan's cape and apron that looked like garments of Heidi indeed gave the impression of a village girl, which was nice.

She's nice, but despite her being a child, she's very noisy.

It looks like she's been incredibly puffing up with pride upon finding out there's someone more inferior than her in this household.

I want to speak my mind and tell her to shut up.

But well, I'm already an adult. Even if I'm treated like a servant by a girl younger than me, I guess there's no way for me to scold her over a minor matter.

I named the girl Sara-chan, probably because of her rustling blond hair, as a form of my modest retaliation against her inside my heart. By the way, this is a secret.

"Eh? Takeru, you can use Shinse letters?"

"Right, I can write them. That's because even someone like me is a high schooler....."

For some reason, Sara-chan looked at my letters and drawing on the ground's surface with an astonished face.

As for me, I was more surprised at the fact I could become a chuuni neet, rather than graduating from high school.

No, I'm working as a farmer, so there's no way for me to be a neet.

That's right, I'm doing a job for a middle school graduate.

Somehow, it didn't feel like my status would improve.

"Incredible. For you to be able to write Shinse letters, Takeru is a literary man, right?!"

"Yeah, I know I'm incredible..... hey, speaking of which, what are Shinse letters?"

When I asked Sara-chan for more detail, it turned out that the letters, which I had written with ease, were apparently the same as those high-rank letters used in official documents, called holy characters.

Being able to read and write letters without seeking assistance is considered a skill needed to obtain a prominent job in this world with low literacy. Especially, those who can use holy letters are treated as an intellectual class and revered as literary people.

Even Sara-chan, who had been taught by a single literary person in this village during her free time, could, at most, write low-rank letters.

Somehow, it seems like the holy letters are being applied by some sort of church on a global scale. If I was to use my former world for comparison, it would probably be equivalent to Latin or Greek.

So would low-rank letters be the same as those in regional languages, such as

French and English?

I tried to write some of those low rank letters used in this Kingdom of Silesia, and it turned out I could write them easily.

“Amazing, you’re so smart! Despite Takeru being a literary man, why are you working as a subordinate of this household? Are you an idiot?”

“Am I an idiot or smart? Honestly, decide which one it is.”

I was told I to cease my job of cleaning cattle’s dung and go straight to this village’s office to apply for a job, which I could do as a literary man.

Since Sara-chan’s teacher worked in that office, it seemed she could introduce me to that person.

I had no idea that the language commonly used in my country, from which I was transported, would be related to me finding a job here.

I wanted to express my gratitude to Sara-chan, who had told me this world’s letters.

However, how should I repent for speaking ill about your job, Sara-chan?

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I, thanked the Rhod family, who had been looking after me over the past days, and took my leave.

I received my one week-worth share of money.

The money that I held in my hand was 7 fragmentary copper coins.

While we are at it, 2 fragmentary copper coins is equal to 1 big copper coin.

If I were to convert the currency here into Japanese yen, 1 fragmentary copper coin would be around 50 yen. Not including the cost of 3 meals per day, which I could eat to my heart's content, I've earned a little less than 350 yen. When working desperately for the whole week.

My earning was extremely low, but there was no work regulation department in this Kingdom of Silesia.

"Oh my, it's good that you've found another job."

"Yes, thank you very much."

And so, everyone from the Rhod household saw me off with expressions similar to that of sighing with relief.

I was being evasive, but, it was wholly thanks to the female warrior, Louise, who's an influential person in this town, that this family decided to hire me. It looks like I'm now indebted to her.

Even though I had helped this family each day by paying for my stay with one fragmentary copper coin, it looks like my work wasn't sufficient enough.

I guess it was reasonable for me to be chased away.

That's right, if I don't pass as a literary man, I won't be able to survive in this world at all.

Feeling the sense of crisis once more, I was brought by Sara-chan to this village's office.

"Senseiiii, I've brought Mr. literary man."

The office was located in the corner of an open space inside this stone-built village.

It was an exceptionally splendid building,

As soon as I entered in, what I saw was a neatly made wooden floor. In this village, where floors are full of gaps, this building was gorgeous.

While we are at it, even the fairly well-off Rhod family, who own a big plantation, has dirt flooring covering more than half of its house. Alongside that portion, they also have stone and mortar-made floors, but apparently, they have to put straw on top of them when it gets cold during the winter.

Even those floors with gaps are considered luxurious here. Yeah, indeed, life here is harsh.

Certainly, this building is the most gorgeous one in this village, but, there is just a single girl inside of it.

Hmm, a girl?

The person who was preparing documents over the desk was wearing a male's attire.

In modern days, you would usually see an office clerk wearing a black-designed business suit, but, it's not like its design is that functional.

The girl's buttons were done up to her nape and she was wearing an extra tight vest, in which one could feel sultry. Her attire gave an impression similar to that of a middle ages' noble or a gentleman.

It was clearly different from those rough clothes worn by villagers. The buttons were pretty, just like jewels. Her attire's embroidery was beautiful, and its sewing was firmly done. Looking at her garments, they were most likely the formal wear in this kingdom.

However, despite her being dressed in such a uniform, to me, she still looked like a brown, short-haired beauty.

“I’m a man.”

Did she understand what I was thinking about from my gaze? The man dressed beauty lifted up her fine cheeks and spoke with a chime-like beautiful voice.

Her cheeks were amazingly slender. Is she a model? Many would agree she is an astonishing beauty.

Is the sensei who proclaims herself as a man past her twenties? It wouldn’t be strange for her to look like a female if she was a handsome male, but it’s hard for me to imagine an adult man who looks like a woman.

Obviously, anything can happen here, in this fantasy world....

“Greetings, Sensei. My name is Sawatari Takeru. It’s my first time to meet you.”

“It’s Lyle Laertius. Right now, I work as a secretary in this area. I’m also in charge of teaching letters to Sara-chan, you see. Also, I’d kindly ask you not to mistake me for a woman. ”

No matter how many times you say it, it doesn’t sound that credible, you know.

However much of a Caucasian you are, your lines are way too slender and your skin is too smooth. For you to be this beautiful, could be it you’re an elf?

However, I see no pointy ears, so I guess, you’re a human.

I was very curious and wanted to ask this person what kind of toner they use but.... I refrained myself from doing so.

I don't know his circumstances, but, if I were to make fun of his statement, I'd most likely just worsen his mood.

Also, this Lyle sensei holds my chances at getting a job.

"Sensei is an incredible person, you know. He's a secretary who was sent from the kingdom's capital, and even that tribal chief, who speaks his mind and holds nothing back, is just a small fry in comparison to Sensei."

"Hahaha, Sara-chan, you're actually the one who doesn't hold back."

This person had a bit of a stiff expression toward me at first, but, I guess even someone like him can laugh with Sara-chan, who's his disciple.

I think his cheerful, smiling face is too pretty.

Seeing how he laughed without denying anything, perhaps, being a secretary was really much more distinguished than being a tribal chief.

Excellent! So he's an influential person, right? I'm going to flatter myself as much as possible.

"Lyle-sama, actually, I.... no, I have some confidence as a literary man." (1)

"I don't remember anyone talking about having self-confidence as a literary man, but, if you say so, I shall test you a bit."

As expected of a teacher who would immediately give me a test.

It seemed that Sara-chan had also made some unpleasant memories regarding tests. I looked at the test I had received from Sensei with bitter expression.

I too hates tests a lot, but, since I had already learned from my bad

experience with the previous job, I decided to become serious and listed as many letters as possible.

“Done.” – Leaving my pen aside, I finished the dictation test by copying down its content.

“Heh....? This is interesting, isn’t it? I may be rude, but I didn’t think someone as young as you could do it. Where did you learn to write holy letters?”

“Umm, it seems like I was transported here from somewhere, but, I have no recollections of that.”

It thought he wouldn’t believe me, were I to say I had arrived from another world, so I decided to pretend I lost my memory.

Things like that usually work in different world scenarios.

Had I simply said the truth, I would’ve probably been treated as a lunatic.

“So Takeru-dono is a stray person? That’s rare indeed. Actually, I had thought that your unfamiliar name would be from somewhere in the eastern direction.”

“Umm, what’s a ‘stray person’?”

“A stray person is considered to be someone teleported from unbelievably far away. Rumor has it they come as a result of an explosion from a summoning magic or a space-shift magic, but, the exact reason is still unclear to us.”

“So you have no details regarding that?”

“Space-shifting and summoning are both rare magic, you see. When they run out of control, rare phenomena tend to occur. From what I’ve heard, there

seem to be people who had their memories disturbed or lost after being transported. Apparently, there are also those who possess strange knowledge, but, it's hard for us to search for the main cause, you see."

"Is that so.....?"

Lyle-sensei is certainly an amazing person. After all, he's been described as such by Sara-chan.

Engraving that extensive knowledge to my heart, I Immediately understood the extraordinary situation, in which I was placed, without the need for an explanation. I was probably one those characters who possessed that sort of ability.

Judging from the Sensei's talk, my case wouldn't sound like a different world transportation, but, I can guess I'm not the only one who has been sent here over the years.

"Umm, Lyle-sensei, I have a request. Please hire me one way or another."

There's no way for me to let this chance slip away.

I have to beg for Sensei's instruction no matter what.

"Even I alone would be more than enough to operate this office, but, since Takeru-dono is a valuable stray person, and also a fellow literary man, whom I have gotten acquainted with after going through all this trouble, I shall hire you on as an assistant clerk."

"Thank you very much."

Like that. I was entrusted with the position of an assistant clerk. It felt as though a sheriff half-heartedly hired a gun-toting stranger as his helper in some Western.

Were there also cases in which he would appoint a bureaucrat at his own convenience?

Even though Lyle is the person who runs this office, no matter how much of a secretary he is, doesn't it feel like he's got way too much authority?

Just who on earth is he.....

(1): He says at first 'Ore', which is a casual form of 'I', and then, says 'Watashi', used on formal occasions.

Chapter 3 – Losgow, the Village of Hot Springs and an Iron Ore Mine

The job of an assistant secretary was, bluntly speaking, boring.

I became Lyle-sensei's assistant, who was in charge of making clean copies of detailed reports and drawing up official documents. However, the amount of work wasn't that big a deal.

Losgow was a small settlement located at the foot of Ye Mountain, with a population that could be, at most, 200 people.

At the outskirts of this village, there is a small iron ore mine that falls under the direct jurisdiction the country, unlike this village that belongs to a local feudal lord. If one was to include laborers and blacksmiths living near that mine, or perhaps, even wandering adventurers, like Louise, the population shouldn't be more than 300 people.

Certainly, this village feels like a miniature garden.

Even though I said my job includes drawing up official documents, it doesn't really amount to much.

I can understand why secretary Lyle decided to work additionally as a private tutor of children, as he had too much spare time.

Still, there was a benefit even in drawing up these boring documents.

While I had been checking on and writing various documents intended for this place's king and feudal lord, I finally was able to understand this village's topography and characteristics.

Even the distance separating here and the royal capital wouldn't take more than 4 days of travel by stagecoach to traverse.

Reversely, it would probably mean the kingdom itself wasn't that big.

Either way, I want to try to go to the royal capital of Silesia.

However, there's something I'm more concerned about....

"Secretary Lyle, are there any hot springs in our village?"

"I guess. If you want to enter a hot spring, you've gotta dig one with a shovel."

As I was told, apparently, there is no convenient place here in which hot water will gush out. Rather, the place along the river on the outskirts of the village would become a hot spring if you dug there.

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Somehow, it feels different. I wonder if it's due to the appearance of this plain hot spring located in this dry river bed.

"Well then, shall we enter together this time?"

"Yes.... no, I'm not quite good when it comes to entering with someone."

Ah, sensei-made an unpleasant face. I guess he's right, as there's no way for us to enter together.

That's because it won't do if we don't hide our private parts.

Were I to insist on doing that too much, I would worsen his Excellency's mood, so I decided to stop.

More importantly, it isn't something to be concerned about right now.

“Secretary Lyle, does this hot spring contain sulfur?”

“Ohh, I see you can understand it well. It does, as there’s a volcanic crater, which exposes them, nearby.”

That’s right. The presence of a hot spring doesn’t necessarily mean there’s sulfur, however, there are lots of instances where a sulfur mine would appear whenever there’s a hot spring nearby a volcanic crater.

The erudite Lyle-sensei, known for his intellectual thirst and vigor, seems to also be a 1st class alchemist, who does field works besides merely drawing up documents, such as checking this surrounding for mineral resources.

I shall ask him for more details regarding this place later.

“Are there also mines with niter in them?”

“Niter, you say? There are none in the surrounding area. If you want niter no matter what, how about ordering some from royal capital, or producing it by yourself?”

Were I to order niter from far away, the size of the budget I would need for my plan would probably skyrocket.

I know this from a manga, but, certainly, niter should be a product obtained from fermentation of animal dung.

I think I should be able to make it if I boil down soil from areas that had been previously used as a toilet for livestock and humans.

I will ask Lyle-sensei, who’s a professional alchemist, for more details regarding that as well.

Having sulfur, niter, and charcoal, I should be able to create gunpowder.

“Could it be..... you’re thinking about making gunpowder?”

“Ohh, did you notice?”

As expected of Lyle-sensei and this medieval times fantasy world.

However, I was surprised he could notice that.

Hmm, could it be that gunpowder is something commonly used in this world?

I thought about marketing it as my own original technique, but....

“I too have never made gunpowder before. I have only read about it being applied before in some distant empire during a war, in history books.”

“I see, so gunpowder has already been used in a war.”

However, it would mean then that gunpowder isn’t commonly found in the Kingdom of Silesia.

Despite the item having already been invented, nobody seems to have recognized its effectiveness yet, I guess.

In that case, it may be possible for me to follow my original plan.

There was a fear that someone would steal my idea, but, I had already decided to tell Lyle-sensei my plan.

Lyle-sensei has been taking care of me a lot, so I don’t mind if he steals the idea.

“Actually, I’m thinking about making bombs created with gunpowder and marketing them for the purpose of open-pit mining.”

“I see, so by creating explosions, you could dig a hole til you hit bedrock?”

That's an amazing idea.... I've never heard about such a method. Is that something Takeru-dono has hit upon?"

That's right. It's a technique I've hit upon.

Well, it's merely rock blasting, but still.

That's why Lyle-sensei, if you gaze at me that much with your eyes radiating with respect, I'll become embarrassed, so please stop.

There's no way for me to tell him my knowledge is something I've gained from a different world.

Obviously, manufacturing bombs takes time and I don't know if I can market this item, However, if things work out, this might become a source of income.

"Lyle-sensei. If it's fine by you, can I have you help me with the production and sale of gunpowder goods? Of course, I'll reward you appropriately."

"Yes, I don't mind. Despite me having lots of free time, I'm deeply curious about manufacturing of gunpowder. Also, I don't particularly mind the money."

Was Lyle-sensei the type of a person that valued knowledge above money?

Well, I guess he's even more remarkable than the tribal chief of this village.

Naturally, I plan to manufacture gunpowder, but, since the iron ore pit belongs to the Kingdom of Silesia, I'll allow myself to make use of secretary Lyle's reputation when marketing it.

A person of doubtful origin, like me, might be able to pass through any obstacle, rather than having to traverse them.

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For the time being, I've decided to check on the site where the sulfur is being

collected when going to the hot spring located on the dry river bed.

Because going there alone would be tedious, I decided to call someone to tag along with me.

The first person who came into my mind was Lyle-sensei, however, I was denied by him to associate with me in bathing together as fellow men. I wonder if Louise will agree to come with me.

Speaking of which, I haven't met Louise much recently since the time I became an assistant secretary.

That's because Lyle-sensei lent me a room to stay at in this village's only inn.

In this inn, there were also a bar and an adventurer's guild.

Once I returned back from my work this afternoon like usual, I saw Louise drinking in the bar.

"Yo, if it isn't Takeru-dono, the assistant secretary."

"Please stop that."

When I told Louise, whom I haven't met for a long time, about me becoming an assistant secretary, she treated me to hunted meat (It was monster meat again), and even congratulated me for getting my new job, but....

Lately, she's been bantering with me each time we meet each other.

It looks like she learned about me being referred to as 'Takeru-dono' by Lyle-sensei, and has since then become addicted to use that name as a key point for her to laugh.

Naturally, I myself knew I wasn't fit for such a formal way of being referred to,

so, I got red in the face upon hearing it.

“Fufu, sorry for that. I’ll bring you some more crazy dog’s meat next time, so forgive me.”

“More importantly, won’t you come with me to a hot spring?”

Because I had already gotten tired of eating grilled monster meat, I thought I would invite Louise to the hot spring.

“Hmm, a hot spring? Let me think for a moment.”

“As expected, is it no good?”

Louise doesn’t seem to be that interested. Perhaps, I should have let her get drunk before trying to invite her?

I was hoping to have a mixed bath with a beauty of exceptional figure, like Louise, however, it might be that she was able to read my skillfully hidden ulterior motive.

“I don’t quite get why I should, you see.”

“Eh.....”

“No, what I mean to say is, I don’t see any meaning in submerging oneself in hot water. If you want to clean yourself, wouldn’t it be fine just to wash yourself with the hot water in a bucket instead?”

“Hmm, I see.”

It seems like taking a bath isn’t common in this place.

I wonder if it’s because of cultural diversity.

Perhaps, it would also depend on the person themselves, as Lyle-sensei wasn't against bathing in a hot spring.

The moment I thought I should give up and not try to force Louise, I heard a cute, familiar voice from beneath me/from below.

"If you're going to a hot spring, why won't you invite meeee!"

"Uwaaaa!"

A rustling, blond Sara-chan, whose appearance resembled that of a childhood friend, appeared from below the table.

Wouldn't I hit my thighs against the table, as a result of being surprised?

What will you do if my old injury from the crazy dog's bite opens?

Despite this rattle and noise, Louise quickly grabbed her plate of cooked beans together with her mug of beer and continued to eat and drink composedly.

It looks like the only one who was surprised was me. Could it be that coming out from below the table is a common part of this world's culture?

"If it's now, I don't mind giving Takeru, special, rights to invite me to a hot spring."

"Hmm, if you have permission from your parents, then I'll take you."

If we choose to go to the hot spring near the sulfur mine, then the place won't be that far away from the village.

There also doesn't seem to be any danger of monsters appearing on our way,

so there's no need for me to object to her request.

Having Sara-chan come with me will be a form of repaying her favor for introducing me to Lyle-sensei.

I'm fine with her coming with me if she wants, but, I'd rather have her receive permission from her parents first.

"Looks like you're treating me like a child. You've got some guts, even though you were a servant just recentlyyy."

"Sorry for that."

Sara-chan stuck out her almost flat chest while raising up her chin.

She most likely intends to act bossy, but, because she's a child, it looks cute instead.

Still, isn't this all the more reason for her to get permission from her parents, since I used to be their former servant?

I'm not sure if it exists in this world or not, but I'd hate it if I had to be involved in some sort of legal case.

"If it's permission, then I can get it. So, take Sara-chan quickly with you."

"Ah, is that so?"

Holding her plate and mug of beer skillfully in both her hands, Louise said so with a disappointed face while eating her side dish.

If Sara-chan was to go rampant here, she would most likely hinder Louise in eating.

It would be a different story if it was just Sara-chan, but, if the elder-sister-like Louise insists so, I can only follow what she says.

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Carrying towels and shovels, the two of us went to a spring located on a dry river bed.

Indeed, there was a stream coming up from a brooklet-like small river.

The smell of sulfur, which I could detect, gave me some hope of turning this place into a mining site.

“Well then, it’s time to dig. Takeru, dig a hot spring for ussss.”

“Yes, yes.”

Could it be that, even now, I’m still a servant of the Rhod family?

Well, since I was indebted to Sara-chan, I started to dig a big hole, like I was told.

Interestingly enough, clean water mixed with mud continued to gush out as I was digging firmly and gradually.

Digging a hole becomes a habit when you do it gradually, and once you become hooked, it doesn’t feel like you will be bothered by digging at all.

“Lyle-sensei said that your skin turns pretty when you submerge in a hot springggg.”

“That’s right, I guess this will work as well.”

Still, to think that Lyle-sensei would know about a hot spring’s properties in this period. I guess he’s way too incredible.

Could it be, he.... who isn’t a girl, is actually a modern person that was transported from another world?

Hmm, thinking about that, it's indeed a frightening possibility.

This time, should I have tea with Lyle-sensei and try to casually ask him about modern times.

One thing I can tell is, that there's a chance Lyle-sensei's transparent-like skin was created as a result of this spring.

And then, if I hide for a long time somewhere in this surroundings, will I be able to watch some precious bathing scene involving Lyle-sensei?

"Takeru, are you thinking about some dirty things?"

"Arara, you can tell?"

Not like I'm particularly thinking about anything dirty, since Lyle-sensei is a man. Even if I was to see bathing scenes involving a man from time to time, it shouldn't be considered a crime.

Rather, it should be fine for fellow men to take a bath together, but, for some strange reason, I'm feeling guilty.

"Well, it's fine either way. Let's enter quickly."

"Ummm..... I think it's the right time to ask, but, are you really fine with us entering together?"

No matter how much of a flat-chested child Sara-chan is, it felt a bit awkward.

Since it's quite bothersome to dig two holes in separate places, it can't be helped but have a mixed bath.

"Takeru, are you the type of a person who gets aroused by looking at naked

children?”

“.....No, I guess I’m not, even if I’m told that.”

“My mom told me I should be careful, because there are people like that, but, isn’t it fine if you’re not like them.”

“You’re right. I guess it’s all about protein.”

Since it would be troublesome if I were mistaken and reported as a lolicon, I decided to stay composed.

Sara-chan peeked at my face with her upturned eyes as if searching for something.

The pink-colored lips of Sara-chan, whose appearance was vivid, changed into a smile.

I wonder, if I’m not being made fun of.

For a high schooler to be ridiculed by a girl 5 years younger, what will people think about that?

Somehow, it felt like she was putting on airs. As I was thinking so, Sara-chan suddenly undressed and became naked.

Uwa, I guess in this world there’s no concept of underwear.

Or perhaps, it’s because of her being a child born in countryside?

I couldn’t think of anyone I could compare her with, so I didn’t know.

No good, my heart is beating fast. Don’t panic! A hero who comes from another world isn’t supposed to panic!

“Takeru..... however much it is, I’ll be embarrassed if you stare at me that much.”

“Sorryyyyyy!”

I guess it will be a breach of manners if I stare at her too much. Protect me, my manners! Come to me, my seat belt!

I quickly undressed myself and I submerged inside a natural bathtub.

Speaking of which, I thought Sara-chan had no chest at all, but, it turned out she actually had some. On that chest of hers, which was around the size of a small wooden bowl, there was plumpness.

The tips of her slightly bulged chest resembled cherry blossom-colored petals, however, the area near her crotch was still smooth like that of a child.

Oh my, I’m really staring at a child’s body, which is probably wrong by any means.

The situation suddenly felt like the one with an R18 setting.

Sara-chan quickly entered into the bathtub.

The hot water was white and cloudy, so as long we submerged inside the spring, it would be fine even if something was to explode.

I’d rather you not ask me what’s going to explode.

“This feels goodddd.”

“Yes, indeed, it feels like being reborn.”

For Sara-chan, it was probably something just pleasurable.

However, for me, it was a bath which I could enjoy again after half a month.

The climate here was much more dry than in Japan. Therefore, even washing your body with hot water would suffice, still...

“As expected, you can’t call yourself a Japanese if there’s no bath!”

I thought so from the bottom of my heart, or better to say, shouted.

Being a Japanese is about baths!

I’ve decided to come to a spring more often.

“That’s right, don’t you use soap?”

“Soap, it’s that thing that creates bubbles, right? I’ve never used anything as expensive as that.”

Certainly, if memory serves me rights, there wasn’t even something like that in this village’s only general store.

Despite there being towels, there is no soap?

“Hmm, would you like to try if there was one?”

“If I say ‘I want ittt~’, will you buy it for me, Takeru?”

Oh my, so you already know how to coquet a man at this age? Indeed, she’s a scary kid.

Despite Sara-chan being a child, she can sometimes say things like an adult woman.

Perhaps, it's because of the short life span in medieval times.

She's still a 12-year-old kid, but, unless she quickly becomes an adult, she will probably die.

This what you call living fast, isn't it?

Who would've thought the 17-year-old me would be teased by a girl this fast. Certainly, that's a frightening speed for a fantasy world.

"I'll try and see if I can get a hold of some soap."

However, I won't be buying it, you see.

It should be fine if I try to make it.

"Hee? As expected of Takeru, who's a literary man."

Somehow, it felt like I was being revered.

For some reason, it looks like Sara-chan imagines a literary man as someone who draws amazing graphs together with Lyle-sensei.

In comparison with that cheat-like level pundit, I'm merely just the sort of person who possesses half-baked modern knowledge. However, I do want others to place their expectations on me.

If I remember correctly, soap should be easily made with oil and ash.

Provided it's true that soap is expensive, maybe it's possible for me to turn this into goods for sale too.

Chapter 4 – The Completion of the Bomb and the Conclusion on its Exclusive Agreement

“So you plan to make soap? Even though you had come up with gunpowder just recently, you still have lots of ideas, don’t you?”

As usual, I commuted from the inn to the office. During our break, I told Lyle-sensei about my plan to make soap, which left him astonished.

For some reason, my mind wouldn’t stop flowing with ideas once I began to think about making gunpowder.

Because I lacked experienced subordinates and skills required as an alchemist, the manufacturing of gunpowder wouldn’t go well in practice, but, I had decided to count on Lyle-sensei’s extensive knowledge.

“Surely, from what I’ve heard, there’s a city in which soap is produced using olive and canola oil. I’m not well-informed about that alkaline mentioned by Takeru-dono, but, it’s certain that ash and quicklime can combine together and solidify, right?”

“As I thought, it might be not possible for us to obtain olive oil, but, apparently we can use monsters’ oil as a replacement.”

The only animal oil which can be obtained for free in Losgow is that from monsters.

There are 3 types of monsters that live nearby this village, these are: Crazy

Dogs, Gray Rat-Men and Blood-sucking Bats.

In case there are too many monsters to deal with, we file a petition for monster extermination in the Adventurer's Guild and have Louise-san accompany us with hunting. The spoils would be then divided between us and I would be able to extract the oil from my part.

I've seen how oil and ash can be mixed together to make soap in the past, but, right now, I'm continuously failing in doing so.

I managed to create a soft, soap-like thing, however, it didn't make lots of bubbles and gave off a bad stench, similar to that of clay.

Making a high-grade product using olive oil is out of question, but, as long the soap is affordable and usable by commoners, it should sell well.

"That is to say, Takeru-dono wants me to assist with the production of soap, right?"

"Well, if you put it frankly like that, then it's just as you say."

Even a wooden bucket is feasible as long as its method of production is established, but, as one would expect, I'd rather have a much experienced alchemist assist me.

Fufufu – Lyle-sensei burst into laughter as soon as I humbled myself and put my hands together.

"Even though we have yet to make gunpowder, Takeru-dono is really a slave driver."

“I apologize.”

Despite me receiving my job through the good offices of Louise, I kept doing nothing but causing problems for Lyle-sensei.

“Ah no, I was just kidding. In fact, I’m glad that my skills can be of any help. There is nobody in this village with whom I can talk to regarding alchemy, so if it wasn’t for Takeru-dono, I wouldn’t even come up with things like making gunpowder or soap.”

Putting up with my troublesome talks and smiling while being carried away by our conversation, I thought there would be no good-hearted person willing to help me out.

I might be stuck on him because of that.

Naturally, I was straightly refused when I tried to offer to wash Sensei’s back as a form of gratitude.

It was a minor joke, so please, stop drawing back while looking at me with a serious expression.

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Anyway, a decent prototype of a bomb was done.

It was a jute bag completely filled with gunpowder and connected with a detonating cord made from gunpowder wrapped in paper.

I was even ready to give up because of the amount of hardships I had to endure in order to reach this final stage.

Ah, but I guess that’s fine as long as it’s just once, right?

Far from sulfur, it was much harder to create niter. That's because it's something you obtain from throwing in human and cattle's waste.

We built a small hut and buried the waste with grass under the soil. Then, we waited for the niter to start be produced by microorganisms and collected it. Apparently, you can also use corpses as a replacement for the waste, but, it's smelly either way.

Not to mention, you would need at least 2-3 years for the bodies to decompose and release niter, which is impossible for us to wait. Therefore, to make the bomb, we received some soil from the Rhod household's cattle hut and extracted the niter from it.

Obviously, we could pick some soil from humans' toilet as well, but, even in a western fantasy world, checking on the condition of toilet was cruel enough.

If this was medieval Japan, people would have, supposedly, built places designated for collecting waste, such as cesspools, however, in this world, nobody seems to use manure made from humans' excrements.

This might sound dirty, but, apparently people here would just store their waste in jars and throw away their contents on a road's surface in suitable amount....

Oh, thinking back, the harshest thing to deal with when I arrived here for the first time was the toilet.

There was no toilet paper; the only thing I could use to wipe were leaves.

I also used to sing the 'micchan michi'(1) song back when I was a brat, but, I wouldn't have thought I would end up wiping my ass with leaves.

I discussed with Lyle-sensei on the matter of making paper, however, it turns out there are actually no defined methods of paper manufacturing.

Certainly, even in the office, we do use paper despite its bad quality.

Since the paper is bad and starchy, we will at least use parchments for truly important matters.

When I asked Sensei as to why paper isn't common here, it turned out it was due to the lack of materials, rather than technical problems.

Was it because of the dry climate? Just like in my hometown, Japan, it felt as though trees here wouldn't grow back after being cut down and become a bare hill.

The reason why there wasn't enough wood was because of people here lumbering trees without planting them first. The more a city expanded, the more wasteland appeared.

Even with my modern knowledge, material shortage is the only thing I couldn't help with.

As expected, what is needed is the power of money.

By the way, when I tried to ask Lyle-sensei about what they do after using the toilet, his face turned red as he answered 'Using magic....'

That's mean, Lyle-sensei. I wanted you to confirm that for me, but, with my magic skill being close to zero, my hopes for that have become even smaller.

If I possessed a magic tool or a magic gem, even someone like me could become able to use magic. However, that being said, the price of such things was unreasonably high.

As I thought, even in this world, everything comes to money, money, money when you want to do something.

Now, let's return to the main topic.

Together with Lyle-sensei, we carried bombs with their attached detonation cords and went to an iron ore mine located deep inside the mountains near Loggow.

The mine was even smaller than what I had thought at first.

There were few, small caves from which laborers transported minerals on small goods wagons. The laborers were exhausted and wore worn-out clothes. Iron-made chains were attached to their legs.

“Are they possibly...?”

“Slave miners. They are the one who work this mine, you see.”

Several of them were carrying minerals on wagons.

There were also slaves clearing away tunnels from earth and sand by transporting them on smaller wagons. Besides them, there were also soldiers watching slaves while holding long clubs.

The chains attached to the slaves’ legs were most likely intended to limit their freedom of movement and hinder their escape.

“.....”

“Since the conditions in a mine are severe, having a disposable labor force is very vital. Takeru-dono, don’t you have slaves in your country?”

Lyle-sensei spoke to me as if noticing my silence.

I was at loss for words upon seeing people being forced to work in the worst environment and having their freedom taken away.

Judging from the way the usually gentle and graceful Lyle-sensei could watch this scenery with composure, slaves were probably common in this world.

However, for me, who was brought up in times long free from slavery, this

was a shocking view.

According to Lyle-sensei's explanation, slaves are generally considered to be those who are unable to clear their debts.

Even I could become penniless and fall into debt.

The me right now was living in a society run by slaves.

For the sake of surviving in this world, it was clear to me I couldn't quarrel with the reality.

Still, this scenery burned into my memory.

"I apologize, Sensei. Let's proceed."

"Takeru-dono, over there, you will find the mansion of this place's governor."

At the entrance of this mine, the surroundings resembled that of a small village.

In addition to miserable shacks where the slaves stayed, there were also row houses for soldiers and engineers, and a blacksmith's shop where one could melt and process ores.

And then, there was the mansion of this mine's governor, which was the tallest in this shabby village.

It was a building with a proper wooden floor. As soon as we were guided by maids and entered inside, what awaited us was a room made of large planks.

The furniture here was splendidly made. The interior was lined with stuffed monsters from the vicinity, and even decorated with vivid tapestries.

Were they made by this mine's blacksmith? the room was ornamented with an iron-made knife, sword, halberd, and plate mail as well.

These weapons were probably crafted by someone even more skilled than the blacksmith in our village.

Honestly, I don't think the person who decorated this very boorish room has a refined taste, but, it may be that being a governor of a mine is beneficial.

Meaning, I can expect quite a profit from doing business with my next trading partner.

Once the door opened, a half-naked, muscular man entered inside.

The man was in his prime and his head was smoothly becoming bald. His physique was even larger than that of the female warrior, Louise.

"Looks like I made you wait. My name is Nattal Dacole, and I'm this mine's governor."

So it was this guy? At first I thought it was some miner as he was wearing a pair of simplistic Farstian trousers while being half-naked.

Despite that, that Nattal turned out to be some muscular macho dude. The amount of the muscles in his upper arms and his somber, bald head made him look like some protagonist from a Hollywood movie.

I gazed at those piling up muscles in admiration. As I did so, the man bowed his head apologetically. Did he misunderstand something?

"I apologize for appearing like this in front of you. I've just returned from the mine's actual location, so...."

"No no, we too have come here uninvited, therefore... by the way, my [Ore], that's not right, my [Watashi] name's Sawatari Takeru. Nice to meet you."

I too introduced myself while bowing down deeply and hurriedly.

To think that this mine's governor, named Nattal, would genuinely bow his head toward a shabby, 17 years old greenhorn like me. Could I really afford that?

For this elegant man in his prime, not to mention, a personage of a high social status to treat me this politely, I felt ashamed of myself.

Despite one's viewpoint regarding a topless, muscular man being a pervert, one could notice this man's fine attitude displaying unaffected sincerity, fortitude, and vigor.

What a great person he is to work in a mine despite being the governor of this place.

Apparently, Lyle-sensei and Nattal are acquainted with each other, since both of them were appointed to the same village as civil servants.

It may be that Nattal is deliberately acting kind toward us, in order to prompt the negotiations, as he knows we are here to sell him the bombs.

However, even if I'm cautious of him, I can't help but have a good impression of his straightforward attitude. Not to mention, Nattal, with his beautifully balding head, greatly resembles a favorite actor of mine from a western movie.

I'm fond of beauties, but, I'm also quite weak toward good-looking adult males.

"Then, without further ado, can I have you demonstrate to me that thing called a bomb?"

So as to show him in practice the effect of the bomb, I blew a newly dug tunnel inside a quarry to atoms.

Just to make sure we weren't affected, I prepared a long cord and distanced myself far enough before detonating the bomb, however, even that much wouldn't prevent the violent blast from beating our eardrums.

For me to create such a fearsome thing. (Obviously, the one who took care of the compounding was Lyle-sensei, but whatever.)

“Uooooohhh!” – Was Nattal agitated by his first in a lifetime blast? He held aloft both his arms while shouting that.

“What’s your impression?”

“This thing called a bomb has splendid power. I guess we would save lots of time, were we to use it wisely.”

Checking on the huge hole left by the explosion, Nattal gathered minerals, which had been hurled, and touched them one by one.

It would be nice were he to take a liking to the bombs and buy them at high price, but.

“For each bomb, I’ll pay you with a silver..... No, how about one gold coin?

“That’s.....”

I took a deep breath. A single gold coin is a large amount of money.

I wouldn’t have thought I would manage to sell the bombs at such high price.

Since bombs are considered a rare item in this world, perhaps, I should increase their price....

“Honestly, you aren’t going to overcharge me more than this, right? I place my trust in you as a fellow working for the same country. What’s more, I told you before I can barely afford this much, didn’t I?”

“Haha, no way. Of course, please do so.”

I broke in a cold sweat while laughing. Nattal most likely saw through my expression.

As one would expect from a veteran governor, his ability to negotiate was

quite sharp.

“Also, I’d like to place a condition on your purchase. I’d like for you to pay me afterwards.”

“Umm, what’s the meaning of that?”

“I would be troubled if I were to supply you with defective products, so you will only have to pay for items that work properly. Otherwise, rumors might spread in the village about how ineffective my bombs are if you fail to successfully use them in practice.”

“Ah—, well, I guess you’ve got a point. Right.”

I made a wry smile as soon I looked at Lyle-sensei next to me.

Certainly, there have been lots of cases where a bomb would fail to explode despite it emitting smoke.

With Lyle-sensei’s effort, we should be able to adjust the bomb’s compound as we wish, so it’s hard to imagine it could fail, but, nothing can be said for sure in regards to gunpowder.

Obviously, we should also consider the possibility of a misfire.

As long there are no defective products, it should be no problem for customers to pay afterwards.

“And then, there’s one more condition.”

“Yes?”

‘You still want to complain about something?’ – Nattal took out a golden coin for the bomb while wanting to say that, which made me endure patiently.

“Despite Losgow’s ore mine being a small one, it’s actually state property. You do understand that we.... plan to promote these bombs, right?”

“Uhhh.....”

He probably won’t understand even if I say it in a suggestive tone.

Unable to watch me becoming astonished, Lyle-sensei whispered in my ear.

–Let’s form an exclusive agreement with the Kingdom of Silesia. I think there’s no need to worry about others merchandising this bomb, but, wouldn’t it be fine to do so either way?–

Hmm, I see. Certainly, it’s just as Lyle-sensei says. I agree this is a favorable opportunity to form an agreement, considering the fact we can use Lyle-sensei’s position as a state secretary.

“Well, if you make an exclusive agreement, you will be able to build a market for bombs in other mines and places, where the use of bombs is essential for public works. I see no harm in doing so.”

“Then, I’ll accept your offer.”

Bowing down my head, I was still reflecting on my carelessness.

That’s because, despite making every effort to create gunpowder, I didn’t consider the idea of expanding our market for that.

After all, this place here is just a rural area. I need to merchandise this bomb in other regions of this kingdom, so there’s no way for me to let this chance slip away.

On the other hand, if I want to sell products for consumer use, it won’t do

unless I specify the characteristics of our market, since we can't monopolize this area, right?

Is there no good solution for that? I shall ask Sensei, who's a fountain of wisdom, later.

More importantly, there's something else I should mention.

"Afterwards, please pay utmost attention so as not to get yourself involved in an accident. There's also the fear that a tunnel might collapse from an explosion."

"Haha, haven't I told you already? I'm a mine engineer, so I won't commit such a blunder. Still, well, I agree with you about paying more attention when handling these things. I'm grateful for your advice.

Even if Nattal was to estrange someone due to his nagging, I thought I had to give him at least some advice.

Even in the modern Japan where I used to live, there are lots of instances where people will be buried alive in a mining accident.

I'd have an uneasy conscience if those miners from before died because of my bombs.

The black powder, which I'm selling, has a low level of safety. Therefore, it's necessary to have Nattal pay enough attention.

Translator and reference notes:

(1): Apparently, Japanese kids sing this when taking a dump so as to make their defecation easier.

Chapter 5 – The City of Est and the Establishment of the Sawatari Takeru Company

Finally, as a result of trial and error, I managed to complete the soap.

Despite saying so, I was still far from obtaining a fine quality one, which could produce white, fragrant foam.

Rather, what we got instead was a large number of unrefined, clay-like, smelly, failed products that couldn't solidify well.

However, I knew that even a failed product will be enough for laundering clothes, so I decided to put them up for sale as detergents for 1 fragmentary copper coin, as a part of a big sale.

Apparently, commoners in this world will use a mixture of ash and water as a replacement for detergent. Compared with that simple mixture, even a failed soap will be more effective in removing stains.

While we are at it, the price for the high grade monster-made soap is 1 silver coin each.

At first, I thought I was overcharging way too much in comparison with the cost of the raw materials, not to mention, the market price for olive oil and canola-made soaps were also different based on the region, but, it seems that the retail price for a bar of soap could also reach as high as 1 gold coin.

Now that I think about it, most of the high grade products with defects are sellable for at least ten times its original price, so there's probably no way I can't sell mine.

When I had brought the completed soap to the family of Rhod, Sara-chan was

overjoyed.

It was a secret, but, before putting the soap up for sale, I intended to have them use some samples.

‘Thank you! Thank you!’ – Sara-chan expressed her joy with these few words. This was also the reason why I had them try it out.

‘Let’s go the spring again, together!’ – Getting carried away, she suddenly said this. Following that, I was gazed fixedly at by Sara-chan’s father.

Louise-nee-san..... didn’t you say you’d receive her parents’ permission?

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I took the opportunity and put the soap on an experimental sale when going to local general stores and a second-hand shops. More and more people started to buy my items in large quantities.

At any rate, my pockets are now filled with gold coins.

If the sale of the soap goes favorably together with the bombs, I should be able to yield more profit, so it should be fine to treat my products as luxury items, even if it’s just a bit.

“Do you sell magic items?”

“For now, we only have this ‘wand of the flaming orb’”

As expected, even second-hand shops have little in stock. As for general stores, you can only find lots of daily necessities there.

With this ‘wand of the flaming orb’, as long as I shout out ‘Fireball!’ clearly, I can cast the very basic, and at the same time, the most ultimate flame orb spell without being capable of using magic.

Still, because I can't figure out this wand's remaining durability, I don't know how many times can I use the same spell.

Anyway, should I buy this wand? It would greatly comply with the gunpowder as my weapon.

This undefined wand, which is the specialty of this shop, cost 5 silver coins.

I can't find fault with other people rather than myself, but, this is indeed a silly pricing. I wonder how many similar wands this guy has lying in stock.

"I wonder if you don't have any tool for casting water magic."

"Uhm, no. After all, our village is located in the countryside, you see."

Since there is a problem dealing with toilet waste, I thought I'd surely like to have water magic, but...

As expected, there's no other option than going shopping in some city, is there?

"Then, please sell me all these recovery vials and antidotes."

"Oi oi, do you plan to buy up my shop? Please spare me."

Ah, is that so? I guess buying up everything won't do despite having money.

Since there are neither churches nor hospitals, potions will become the only lifeline.

"Sorry for that. Then, please give me 5 of each."

"Yes, thank you for your continued patronage."

A potion's cost is relatively high, still. 1 item was around 1 silver coin.

I should stock myself up.

I wanted to sell the soap, so I entrusted the seller with the sale. He was very pleased to see me bringing in rare goods every time.

I also wish I could've bought back my school bag and my writing implements that I had with me when I came to this world, but looks like everything was sold.

Too bad.

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"In that case, how about we visit the City of Est?"

As I complained about how shabby items in Losgow are, Lyle-sensei made such an attractive proposal.

"But, Secretary Lyle, won't it be bad if both the secretary and his assistant leave their post?"

"Recently, have we had anything to do?"

Despite me humbling myself and making myself appear serious for the first time in a long while, Lyle-sensei replied without holding back.

Certainly, it has been more than a month since I arrived here, but, from that time we haven't done anything that could really be considered a job.

Didn't we have to deal with just a single wedding?

“If there is any procedure that requires authentication, we can rely on the tribal chief to do it instead of us. Conducting a survey of the neighboring areas is also one of the important jobs of a secretary, so it won’t hurt even if we drop by Est once.”

“I see, so basically we can have some fun under the pretext of conducting a survey.”

I too spoke my mind without holding back. As I did so, Lyle-sensei laughed.

Having fun under such a pretext, no matter how I look at it, we looked like bad public servants.

However, I was glad to know we became friendly enough to exchange jokes this way.

“Of course, it was a joke. We won’t just be fooling around. Considering Takeru-dono’s business, I think it’s much wiser to greet his excellency, the Earl, who resides in Est once.

“I see. In other words, you’re telling us to pay a courtesy visit to the authority that owns the land....”

The places in the vicinity here, including the village of Losgow, are part of the territory that belongs to the Earl, Est.

So, if I want to expand my trade, it’s necessary to be on good terms with the landowner?

Greetings are also an important part of doing business, I guess.

As soon as I finish my job and return back to the inn, I will request Louise to become my guard, just to be on the safe side.

‘A horse drawn cart is the basis of every trader.’ – I hesitated whether to buy

or borrow a horse drawn cart, but, Louise gave me her input by saying those words, so I decided to buy a second-hand prairie schooner(1).

A prairie schooner isn't just a simple horse cart. It also has a canopy spread on top, so as to endure the wind and rain.

Considering the fact that our goods are soap and gunpowder, it won't do unless we have something waterproof to protect them.

Even a second-hand prairie schooner was surprisingly expensive, making me become flat-broke. Since I had little money left, I borrowed a horse from the Rhod family.

I received a request from the mine to deliver Losgow's iron-made goods to the city. I estimated I would profit if I load up and bring back things that are missing in Losgow, such as clothes and salt, on the schooner.

For some reason, I was uplifted and felt as though I had become a real peddler upon obtaining my own schooner.

My aspiration to become a magic sword wielding hero didn't vanish, but, becoming a peddler wasn't half as bad too.

Loading the cart with items we were entrusted to deliver, as well as the gunpowder and soaps, we decided to depart for the city of Est.

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The first time I saw the city, I thought it was gloomy.

I guess, I was at fault for raising my expectations too much.

I thought it was natural for Losgow to look shabby, since it was primarily a

mountain village, but, this region where the feudal lord lives, is probably, so to speak, just a prefectural capital.

Even though we travelled for 9 days on the shaky cart and on a path that meandered between wastelands, hills, and rural districts, what we arrived at is this not very big city?

As expected, no matter where you'd go, Est felt like a countryside.

However, despite this city being small, I was deeply moved by the stone-made wall stretching around it.

'A fantasy world is the best!' – is what I thought.

I affectionately touched the surface of the wall with a face deeply impressed. Lyle-sensei, and even the guards protecting the entrance gazed at me with disgust.

Come on, this is the first for me to witness a stronghold like this. You ought to have more feelings.

Not to mention, I thought that this city's main street and plaza are properly and splendidly made of inlaid pebbles.

When I asked Lyle-sensei more regarding the city, it appears that the differences between this place and a village didn't just pertain to the population, but also things like maintained streets or defense facilities, such as this stronghold.

Also, even though this city is small, it's actually similar to a Japanese prefectural capital, so there will be points of contacts from all kind of guilds and church subdivisions located in this place.

The presence of castle walls means there's also a castle.

The earl I'm going to meet lives in that castle located in the center of the city.

As expected, when it comes to an earl-sama, even the castle will be made from stones that stand out.

Still, for some reason, its steeple was painted with red as its primary color and towered pointlessly as high as 3 storeys, making the whole castle look like an amusement park. Were I to describe the castle imprudently, it resembled a love hotel with strange ornaments.

Was it due to there being many ornaments? It felt as though the castle neglected much of its main purpose, which is to defend.

Certainly, if I'm not wrong, noble families should be the ones to protect their territories with their own efforts.

When I asked Lyle-sensei about that, he replied ambiguously by saying that there had been no wars in that surroundings for more than a hundred of years.

As one would expect, the feudal lord-sama of this place is a bit eccentric.

Taking the schooner to an inn, we booked a room and took a breather, after which we decided to meet the feudal lord at his castle.

Once we contacted the castle about Secretary Lyle arriving, not to mention, him wanting to greet the feudal lord because of his intention to establish a new trade on the latter's territory, an appointment was immediately booked.

Even here, Secretary Lyle's influence would come into effect. He has authority, knowledge and a good appearance. Truly, he's an all-round athlete.

Rather than me, isn't Lyle-sensei more suitable to become this world's hero?

While we are at it, I tried to talk Louise into visiting the castle.

‘I don’t like nobles.’ – However, I was curtly refused.

In addition to a pretty secretary, I thought that having a beautiful guard would make both sides understand each other better, but well, it can’t be helped.

I asked for Louise’s assistance through the adventurers guild’s request form, so I couldn’t afford to take any more advantage of her courtesy.

Once we were invited to enter the castle, there was an extravagant interior.

Unlike all the buildings that I had seen before, this one was much more spacious and had a high ceiling.

I’m also excited about things like a real, medieval times castle, but, this is the first time for me to see a red carpet spread out on a floor with no gaps since coming to this world.

I was overly excited, since, til now, I had been living in that mountain village, Losgow.

Later, I understood that the earl-sama of this place likes red.

There were luxurious furnishings lining up inside the room, but, many of them were red-colored.

Holy crap, shouldn’t have I dyed the soap red?

A butler wearing a tail coat appeared and we were led by him.

I thought we would be surely showed in to a room similar to that for an audience when meeting the great earl-sama. As I was thinking so, we reached a room with a round table.

While we are at it, both chairs and the table were painted red too. Just what

the heck.

The chairs' cushions were soft and the atmosphere felt relaxing.

Without thinking ahead, I sat on my chair cozily. As I did so, a middle aged man, with his body wrapped in a red dress drawn with extravagant patterns, appeared, making me stand up in a hurry.

“Ahh no, please continue to enjoy like that. My name is Donovan Est Almark and I'm the owner of this castle. Thank you for coming all the way here.”

Even if I was told to enjoy, I wonder if I wasn't forcing myself on the earl-sama. Anyway, I stood at attention and matched my movements with Lyle-sensei.

Once the earl reached his seat, we were urged to sit again, so it looked like it was fine for us to do so.

Uhhh, I guess the greeting comes first. For well-bred nobility, I wonder which form of greeting is the most favorable.

“This is the first time for me to meet you, your Highness. My name is Sawatari Takeru. You seem to be in a good mood, which is a lucky aspect of today.... ahh, I guess I'm just boring you, but...”

Somehow, my introduction became tedious, so instead of that, I presented him with a pack of a soap and gunpowder as a gift.

For some reason, it felt like a year-end gift.

Showing not the slightest interest toward the gunpowder, the earl-sama picked up the white soap and gazed at it as if wanting to lick it. Kunkun – he even sniffed the soap.

I thought that the bomb would have a much greater impact as an invention,

but, the earl seemed to take a strange liking to the soap.

I guess, well-bred people are more attracted towards such things.

“Takeru-dono, I’ve heard you were appointed as an assistant secretary this time. In the Kingdom of Silesia, being a secretary or nobility, holds the same rank that serves his Majesty the King. By all means, please call me just Donovan. Ahahaha”

“Don’t forget that this is an official stance, so please pay the nobility proper respect by adding ‘sama’ to their names.”

Lyle-sensei whispered these words in a hurry to me, who didn’t know what to do and was unaware of this world’s manners.

Certainly, in my case, only peer language would work.

“Then, I shall call you as Donovan-sama. The aim of my greeting today is to start a new business in your territory.....”

“Well well, Takeru-dono, before we can proceed to this elaborate talk, doesn’t it look like you need to take a breather now?”

The earl-sama interrupted me and ordered his butler to make tea.

A single maid brought the drink to the table. It was obviously not some dingy plain water, but neither a red tea, which is this place’s specialty. Instead, it was a black liquid.

“Eh, could this be.....?”

I was familiar with this manly aroma, which almost brought me to tears from

nostalgia.

If I drink this and it proves to be just some muddy water, please stop with your punchline before this happens.

“I like peculiar things, you see. This is a drink which I obtained from the capital in the southern region and it happens to be popular there recently. It’s called coffee. It’s quite bitter, so in case it doesn’t suite your taste, I can request something else for you....”

So, as I thought, this is coffee? Hooray!

Truth be told, I’m addicted to this. Without holding back, I drank the cup of coffee dry in one gulp.

This caffeine, which I greatly yearned for, felt as though it spread throughout my entire body.

This is it! This is what my body had been yearning for!

“Delicious!”

“I’m surprised, Takeru-dono. This coffee is something we could usually only drink after putting in lots of sugar, but, to think you’d drink it in one gulp, did you take that much of a liking to it?

The aroma was intense and there was a little sourness.

I’ve never drank such a tasty coffee, but, I used to be treated as an oddball when drinking black coffee.

I wonder if the bitterness of the coffee doesn’t match the taste of the local people here.

Even Lyle-sensei tried to drink it by copying my way, but, he would hurriedly

put sugar after making a bitter face.

This is a waste. The best coffee is only when it's a black one.

"I prefer drinking black coffee. I've heard about people adding milk besides sugar, but..."

"Hehhh? So you can drink it just like a milk tea? I don't think such a custom is practiced even in the capital. Indeed, Takeru-dono's way of understanding is very fine."

The Earl would probably be not disappointed if he quickly ordered the milk and drank it like a café au lait.

I thought a noble would be someone who looks massive and stiff, but instead, this person was more easygoing than his looks would suggest.

On top of that, he also gave me another cup of coffee. He's truly a good person.

Apparently, coffee is currently quite popular in the capital, and there's even a cafe serving coffee there. Our discussion covered from topics regarding coffee brands to rare products in the southern region.

It looked like the earl Donovan was fond of rare things. Lyle-sensei was also able to bring out an interesting talk thanks to his extensive knowledge.

Not surprisingly, our discussion changed to the topic about us wanting to start a new business in Est.

"Naturally, I'll grant you the permission to do so. It looks you plan to form an agreement with the country on the gunpowder, but, if you want to merchandize new products for consumer use, wouldn't it be better for you to open your own company?"

I was way too hyped, as the discussion suddenly escalated.

By saying 'my own company', does he mean to tell me to start a company?

To think that I and Lyle-sensei rose in steps even though we had just recently started to peddle on our handmade schooner.

As I hesitated, Lyle-sensei said these words.

"Certainly, what we handle are our products, so it won't do if we become affiliated with some other company."

Sensei, turned his look at me as if implying something.

In other words, is he telling me to establish such a company? Provided he does, I shall make up my mind.

"Then, I.....I'd like to start one."

"Really? That means a new company will be established by Takeru-dono, I guess. Well then, I shall grant you a place in Est for running your business as my form of congratulations. By all means, I'd like for you to build your company on my grounds."

Eh? So he's going to grant me a place?

Does it mean I can have my own place?

The moment I looked at Lyle-sensei with a sidelong glance, she too....that's not right, he too made a surprised face.

True, after all, we will operate with real estate, right?

We were offered way too much of generosity, even from a wealthy noble.

“Hahaha, Takeru-dono, is this thing which you gave me called monster soap? It’s actually a high grade product. I too have a prominent nose when it comes to new, special products from Est.”

I see. I, who became clear-headed thanks to the caffeine contained within the coffee that I could drink for the first time in a long while, understood the intention of the earl, even faster than Lyle-sensei.

Giving me a place to run my business is a prior investment.

I’ve heard about their existing soaps, made from olive and canola oil, but, in this world, soap appears to still be something that could only be obtained in specific places.

Assuming new products are launched in Donovan’s territory, his city will flourish with trade and peddlers.

And as a feudal lord, his profits (taxes) will probably increase as well.

I thought that good-willed nobles are only those living in the countryside, but, this earl could clearly understand the principles of commerce.

The city of Est is known for its production of food. It even develops textiles as its specialty product.

Perhaps the reason why this city flourishes, as well as why there are no people dying from starvation or those collapsed in the street, is not just because of its blessed grounds, but also thanks to this ruler’s skills.

“Donovan-sama, I will gladly accept your offer. The Sawatari Company shall, from now on, deliver your Highness new products, so please look forward to it.”

“Umu, just tell me if there’s anything I can help with. I’m looking forward to

working with you.”

The earl Donovan put a smile on his plump, rosy-cheeked face as a gesture understanding my words.

Fine, I will, without fail, make your investment pay off.

Isn't he quite an understanding earl who can share one's ideas. One could say I was lucky to meet such a ruler by chance.

However, I had no further plans despite making such a promise to him while being carried away.

Well, shouldn't I be able to figure something out?

Notes and references:

prairie schooner – think Oregon Trail image

Chapter 6 – Let's Rescue the Caravan!

“Won't you join me in a monster hunt?”

I was suddenly asked this question by Louise-nee-san (24 years old, single) on whom I could rely on as my guard.

Right after the establishment of the Sawatari Company, I was in a deadlock.

‘Let's open the company~~’ – making such an impressive declaration, the earl, Donovan, granted me a vacant lot in Est's business district, near the city's plaza. I was thankful for that, but....

Now that I think about it, I ran out of funds after buying the prairie schooner.

However, the horse was borrowed from Rhod family.

Despite that, one could say I was in the red to some extent.

I carried the iron-made goods I had been entrusted with from Losgow's mine to Est, so I earned some money, but, it was just peanuts.

Apart from launching the company, we had to erect its building and hire workers as well.

As expected, not even Lyle-sensei, who's familiar with a company's structure, knows how to manage it.

“Possessing the knowledge and being able to execute it are two different things, you see.” – Such was Sensei’s remark.

I too had fully realized that since my arrival in this world.

Later, I had my own plans, but, despite coming to this place for shopping after going to the trouble, it really pained me, since I was unable to take the initiative.

I managed to sell all of my soaps (selling price: 1 silver coin each) and detergents (selling price: 1 fragmentary copper coin each), like hot cakes, thanks to their rarity and cheapness, but, because my profit wasn’t great, it was still not enough.

As for the bombs, they were a product bound by the exclusivity agreement between me and the Royal Family of Silesia, so I couldn’t sell them to other merchants or commoners.

I also considered implementing products containing gunpowder for common use, but they were still at the experimental stage.

Being at the end of my rope, I thought about giving up and returning to Losgow for the time being, but just then, Louise suggested this.

“Shouldn’t it be fine for you to make profits by doing monster subjugation requests? I usually take up escort jobs, so I can make money anytime.”

Uwa, Louise-onee-san, you're too generous.

To think she would offer me a suggestion like this with such a favorable condition.

"In exchange, I'll take the monsters' meat and pelts."

Uwaa, the usual Louise is back.

Most likely, she only wants to eat their internal organs, rather than protect me.

Still, I'm thankful for her suggestion.

Rather than thinking about this and that, it's better to work for now.

I, together with Louise-onee-san and Lyle-sensei, made a party of three and went to the Adventurers' Guild. As we arrived, the situation turned boisterous and hectic.

"You're, are you by any chance adventurers!? This is an urgent request, but, will you please accept it?"

The moment we entered the guild, a middle-aged staff member came to us with a serious look and earnest request.

"It looks like, a caravan of merchants was attacked by monsters near this city.

Right now, there is a garrison heading there, but, we also have received a request for aid. The reward will be the one given by the feudal lord-sama, so please!”

“Okay, okay, we’ll go there!”

Louise, who’s usually known for making swift decisions and taking quick actions, decided to go.

We don’t know how numerous the monsters are, however, since the garrison is heading there too, shouldn’t it be fine?

I’ve heard about this city being a peaceful place, but, monsters will appear even here?

Well, isn’t it a good chance for us to demand gratitude from the earl?

Let’s consider it in a positive way.

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“This is the worst. It looks like the caravan lured a herd of monsters here while running away.”

Taking a glance at the battle in front of him, to which we were heading toward, Lyle-sensei said this while being disgusted.

About 3 km outside the city, a battle between the garrison and monsters unfolded.

More than 50 humanoid monsters were surrounding the caravan.

The small green monsters were goblins, whereas, the big, ashen ones, ogres?

They were all monsters with which I was familiar from an RPG.

I knew what they were from my knowledge, however, my legs froze when I saw the monsters holding weapons, just like humans, and attacking while killing their enemy.

Against them, there were a little less than 10 people holding their spears. It was clear they were outnumbered.

Originally, they should have retreated to this city's bulwark, but there was probably a reason for why they hadn't done so.

What the caravan was carrying with them, were, as I feared, slaves.

Being tied in a row with chains, the slaves were neither able to fully run away nor put up any resistance. With no means to escape, they would die from getting attacked.

Some had their heads had been split open by the rustic clubs held by ogres.

Others, had their chest pierced through by goblins' short swords.

Having no equipment on them, the slaves immediately fell down.

So, finally, the time has come for me to use this? – I mustered my courage and clutched my iron sword.

This was a sword I wouldn't let go of, even if I were to gasp while struggling for my life.

The time has come! I'll show you the real might of my fully mastered North Star Ittou-ryuu! (from my correspondence course)

"That's wrong, Takeru. Use the gunpowder, which emits that strange sound, and throw it at them! Sensei, I'll leave casting magic to you."

A gunpowder which emits strange sound... wai, does she mean those firecrackers that I've been testing recently?

Louise, who instructed me, held a small, portable bow in her hands and easily shot down goblins nearby.

What a fast and accurate headshot!

"Heaven and Earth, I, Lyle Laertius, command thee. Send us the howling cascade; the loudly crying, violent wind; and the crumbling down vast lands. Mow down your enemy, the wrongdoers, with thy power!"

It was Lyle-sensei's middle class, wide range spell of which he was proud, the Spiral Howling.

As he chanted, Sensei raised his hand overhead in a bit of a Chuuni style.

Releasing all his wind, water, and earth-based magic at once, multiple giant water dragons appeared, blowing away the horde of ogres.

Not just the enemy, but earth and stones were also flying around in the surroundings devoured by the tornado-like things, as a result of their shady adverse effect.

It was a fantasy world-like strongest spell. Certainly, magic is a convenient thing.

Compared to that, I was falling off a bit with this kid's toy.

I aimed at a group of monsters and threw a fistful of firecrackers at them.

Next, I lit another firecracker I had on my person, with the minimum output from my 'wand of the flaming orb', and threw it at the goblins.

Pan pan pan pan! – familiar, parched sounds reverberated.

To my surprise, those goblins that received direct blasts, dispersed as a result of their own overreaction.

Eh? My items worked better than I had expected?

Even more than Lyle-sensei's showy attack of dragons.

The familiar explosive sound and light from a firecracker seemed to be more effective in attracting the monsters' attention, making them cease to move for a while.

The garrison also stopped fighting and looked in this direction with dumbfounded faces.

They're just fireworks, you know?

'Kiii Kiii!' – Following that, the goblins stepped on the dispersed firecrackers and screamed in high-pitch voices. They tumbled one after another as a result of them being confused and making a commotion.

Before anyone realized it, Louise switched from the bow to her straight sword and jumped at the goblins, slashing and piercing their chests while moving around.

"What are you doing, throw more of them!"

Being scolded by Louise, I threw lit firecrackers one after another at the goblins and ogres in front of me.

Even though the crackers didn't have that much destructive power, the monsters panicked and faltered each time one of the crackers burst.

Using that momentum, Louise transferred her blunt sword from one position to another while slashing, mowing, piercing, and killing the enemy with almost single blow each.

It was a very quick, single blow, certain kill.

‘*swoosh swoosh*’ – For some reason, the last part was a short-sword two-style attack.

I too wanna become a warrior, like your usual main protagonist. It’s impossible for me though, since I have no skills, but well...

I thought I would act cool by at least casting a spell in the end, so I rammed a fireball at the enemy using my wand, however, the spell wouldn’t even leave a burn on an ogre’s skin.

This attack is even more useless than those firecrackers.

Could it be that this wand’s power is derived from my mana, which is close to zero?

Tohoho....

In the end, with almost half of the monsters being slaughtered by Louise, the rest escaped just like scattering baby spiders.

Many of the attacked slaves and merchants were in bad shape and wounded,

as well as the garrison, so nobody had the spare power to pursue the monsters.

Louise, who finished this fierce battle, had only sustained scratches. She immediately healed herself after drinking a recovery potion.

I, on the other hand, received no injury, as I stood behind her while simply throwing the crackers.

Despite that, why were the crackers that effective?

‘The intellectual type monsters are weak against attacks they are seeing for the first time.’ Louise replied this way when I asked.

In this world, firecrackers are new type of weapon, which has never been seen before.

Apparently, Louise came up with the idea to use them against the enemy when I invited her to a play with fireworks.

Even if that’s true, I would’ve been grateful if she had told me about her tactic at the beginning.

Soon after the battle ended, the caravan’s members and the garrison held a conversation, but only a few lower position employees from the caravan were all that was left.

We don’t know how many people were here at the beginning, but, can it be that almost every one of them were wiped out?

All the merchants who had been chased after and fought back died.

You could say the battle was fierce enough, but, even if the merchants were chased after, they should have had the spare power to request help from the city.

Had they thrown away their carts immediately and escaped to the city, they could've at least saved their lives.

One could say they were greedy til the bitter end.

I would've understood if it was a game, but they miscalculated the right time to escape even though their lives had been at stake.

They were just one step away from reaching the city, so it's not like I don't understand their feelings, but.....

Staring at this sad and gloomy battlefield, filled with both monsters and merchants' corpses lying on top of another, I swore to myself I would throw away my cart and run away when the time called for it.

You can't buy your life with money. As expected, dying here would be something I'd hate.

And then, there were those slaves who groaned painfully but didn't die, despite being pierced and hit by monsters. It should be fine for us to rescue them, right?

“It looks like these slaves have already lost their master. You have your own potions, so you use them at your convenience.”

As soon as Louise stated so, she drew near a goblin’s corpse and started to dismantle it with her knife.

Ahh, she’s going to dismantle even those humanoid monsters.

I was quite against doing that, as it looked somewhat harsh, but, it goes without saying you could even extract those monsters’ fats and squeeze out their oil to make soap.

For the garrison, merchants, and even the slaves tied up in chains and blood besmearing them, it was a blunt view.

Won’t Louise turn everyone against her? I guess she has no discerning eyes for others.

So, this is what it comes to when you have no human rights?

I only had 5 recovery vials with me, so I selected those slaves who could be still rescued and made them drink the vials.

It was hard to make a choice in this life-or-death situation. It felt as though I was in a manga involving disaster medicine.

I was sorry for myself, as I could’ve bought many more recovery vials, had I

known this would happen.

“Why, are you, helping us?”

The child slave, which I nursed and gave the potion to drink asked me with a faint voice. My heart felt incredibly painful.

The child's sand-besmeared long hair was ruffled and its face was covered in mud. It was wearing a robe, which could barely be called clothes, roughly torn off by a monster. It looked as though the child was wrapped in a tattered cloth.

I can't tell its gender despite its thin, worn-out cloth, but, if I look closely, it's young. Even among slaves, there are very young children.

Originally, a child at this age should be placed under its parents' protection. What a pitiful child.

“I don't know, but, I guess it's because I felt I could save you.”

I couldn't change the fact about it being a slave, so perhaps it would be cruel if I gave it false hope, just because of my simple sympathy.

Truth be told, I could buy more potions any time using my money, but, I couldn't buy a life.

However, I knew I couldn't help, even if I applied a modern person's sense of values.

Things turned out like this, because a human's life can be easily purchased in this world.

Good grief, there's no salvation in this fantasy world.

Which is what I hate about this world.

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"Takeru-dono, I heard about it from the garrison. It seems you greatly flourished during the battle with no hesitation."

"No, no, I just happened to be there at the right time."

Once we returned back to the city, we received words of admiration directly from the earl, Donovan.

Rather than this praise, I was more glad about him letting me drink the coffee, but well...

Louise had been invited as well, but she refused the invitation by saying she had to dismantle as many corpses as possible, so only me and Lyle-sensei visited the earl's castle.

Nobody can stop Louise when she's dismantling corpses for meat and pelts.

"I've heard you use used some strange magic when fighting the monsters,

but, was this small ball your weapon?”

“It’s called a firecracker. Truth be told, I originally planned to use it as a toy for children, but well...”

Earl Donovan was brimming with curiosity.

Even though I brought him gunpowder products before, he didn’t show any interest in them. The moment he had heard about these crackers being effective in a real battle, he checked their power by blasting one by himself.

“It would be quite interesting to have these things made into toys for children, but, I think they would become a weapon strong enough to scare off the enemy. Even non-magical items have their good points.”

“I guess you’re right. As expected, perhaps it’s better to sell them as a weapon.”

In China, there’s a custom of using firecrackers for showy celebrations, however, it’s probably not something nobilities from a western culture would be fond of.

Primarily, I had thought about using gunpowder for peaceful purposes, but, it looks like you can only use it as a weapon in these turbulent times.

“Umu, and then, I wanted to discuss with Takeru-dono about your reward, but, things have become slightly complicated.....”

According to what the earl says, the caravan, which sustained losses in both goods and people, seemed to have dispersed as a result of their employer dying.

The remaining employees held a discussion and decided to leave all their broken carts behind. They took the remaining funds and money, and returned back to their hometown.

The problem was, they had a cargo of 13 slaves who had survived the attack.

Since there were no slave traders in Est, nobody would buy the slaves, even if they were sold out.

Therefore, as a form of compensation for causing trouble to the city, the employees forced the slaves, whom they couldn't monetize, onto Donovan.

Despite the earl having them forced onto him, it's not like he wanted the slaves.

"Ahh, I see. So in other words, you want to give me the slaves as a reward, right? Perfect timing. Actually, I'm in need of hands for my newly opened company!"

As expected of the earl who could understand my needs.

Certainly, I also want money, but workforce is what I need the most right now.

Didn't I receive a godsend offer?

"Eh?"

"Ah?"

The earl made a strange expression. Could it be that I said something odd?

Lyle-sensei, what's the meaning of this?

"Slaves are, the majority of them are descendants of those who had drowned themselves in debt, so, they're not suitable for becoming merchants of a trading company."

"Is that so?"

"Even if the slaves aren't malignant enough to become thieves, they're nothing but people who are bound to be ruined. Normally, they would be watched and punished with a rod by someone, and wouldn't become useful unless they worked. They are considered an inferior labor force."

'I guess, it can't be helped' – Sensei smiled, like wanting to say that to me, who was totally unaware of how things worked in this world. He explained it to me profoundly as if talking down at a kid.

Certainly, I remember those slaves' expressions looking as though they had already given up on being humans. Perhaps, the people's opinion here isn't necessarily wrong.

Still, that being the case, aren't the slaves behaving like that because they were driven into a hopeless situation?

"If it's fine with Takeru-dono, I'll hand them over to you as this time's reward, but, judging from what I've heard, there are no good quality slaves....."

'Is it really okay with you?' As if wanting to convey that, the earl exchanged a short look with Lyle-sensei.

"Yes, whichever it is, we need laborers. Takeru-dono won't mind even if his laborers are inferior slaves. It maybe be that he'll come up with a plan on how to raise them into workers."

'Well then, I'll leave it up to you' – The earl gave his permission, as Lyle-sensei declared, with a smile, I would take responsibility.

Yes, I've thought about this before, but....

As expected, by being sensible, I won't gain any trust.

Well, I'm just a shadow when compared to Lyle-sensei, so I guess it can't be helped, right?

Chapter 7 – Sawatari Takeru and the Thirteen Slave Girls

The Sawatari Trading Company Planned Construction Site (in fact it's just another name for a vacant lot) was located in the city's plaza.

I was standing there together with Lyle-sensei and our covered wagon.

And then, in front of me, there were thirteen petite slaves wearing kantoui(1), which could barely be called clothes. They were all standing in a row with their legs tied up in chains.

They are now the property of the Sawatari Trading Company.

The slaves were crouching down with their faces looking through their knees and had expressions similar to that of person with a death wish. It was quite painful to look at them.

Rather, if only there was someone who could agree with me on releasing these slaves.

'That's absolutely out of the question.' – I was stopped by Lyle-sensei.

"Are you really okay with that? These children here are the lowest of slaves."

"However much it is, aren't you going a bit overboard?"

"I'm not. Are you okay with letting them go free? We have yet to prove their worth, but, it shouldn't hurt to bet on them. What's more, all of them are girls."

How do you know that? Well, I guess Lyle-sensei is the type of person that can tell everything.

“There’s a reason for why I know that. To begin with, a male slave will be able endure any labor, no matter how heavy it is, as long it’s given food and gains weight. That’s possible for even a male child.”

“An adult male can be immediately converted into a working force, whereas, if it’s a girl in her blooming age, she can be made into a subordinate. On top of that, if the girl is of exceptional beauty, she can be sold to brothels.”

“However, these dirty, skinny girls won’t even amount to becoming normal slaves. Judging from their appearance, they had most likely been sold and were being taken to some mine by those slave traders, as they were not worthy enough to be raised.”

“In regards to mines, is there any way to utilize even girls?”

“In tunnels, there are small holes dug out in which only children can fit. The children are forced to work, regardless of it being day or night, til they become unusable. Therefore, there’s always a demand for them.”

While saying so, Lyle-sensei frowned his eyebrows in displeasure.

Even if the concept of human rights didn’t exist in this world, it isn’t like the people here didn’t feel any pity for the slaves that were treated as items.

Not to mention, forcing a child to work til it breaks is a cruel story.

Still, as long as nobody finds a clear solution for this, children won’t be able to survive in this harsh world.

“Just a while ago, Takeru-dono proposed setting these girls free, right? Did you think about what would’ve happened if you had done so?”

“Uhhh.....”

“They would become homeless beggars, as there are no jobs for them in this city. Being unable to endure their hunger, they would become criminals by

resorting to theft, in order to obtain food.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t give it any thought.”

I see, so that is why the earl asked me so many times if I wanted to accept these slaves.

If I were to be irresponsible and release them, I would only increase the workload of the garrison, and nobody would become happy.

“You got it? You said you’d be taking care of them, so please have some responsibility. The master of slaves is in charge of giving them food and work, so that they don’t starve. Takeru-dono, you’re the master of these slaves.”

“I got it. I’ll do my best and assume the responsibility.”

As I promised I’d take over the slaves, Lyle-sensei finally smiled and handed me lots of leather-made collars.

“The earl too, probably felt a bit awkward when he let you handle the slaves, so he had these collars made for their identification. If you put these collars on their neck, they will act as IDs and the girls will be recognized as slaves belonging to the Sawatari Company.”

Apparently, there’s a rule where a slave, whose status isn’t recognized as that of a citizen, has to have chains, handcuffs, or a collar attached with their master’s authentication.

As long a slave has that, it will be considered safe for it to walk around in a city.

Saying that slaves, who are no different from humans, are less safe than vagrants was ironic.

“Everyone. This person here, Sawatari Takeru, shall, from now on, become your master! From now, you’ll wear these collars instead of your chains.”

The moment Lyle-sensei shouted that, he walked around and removed the chains from the slaves’ legs using his magic.

Following that, I proceeded with fastening the new collars. Everyone extended their heads and let me affix the collars obediently.

Was it due to them receiving some sort of training? Everyone kept silent, just like robots, and acted as they had been ordered.

I couldn’t recognize the base color of their hair and their kantoui (or should I say, a piece of cloth?), probably due to them being smeared. However, everyone looked gray. So this is where the name Cinderella derives from?

Despite being picked on by her evil, stepmother, Cinderella still sparkled with life.

However, all these girls here had faces and eyes filled with death wishes.

Everyone had worn-out clothes, but, I couldn’t afford to buy all of them new ones.

‘As expected, it will be bad if I don’t make additional purchases.’ – I looked into my wallet and made a sour look.

It will be fine if I can earn more money later.

Pulling its clothes, a single child was walking around half-naked, with its clothes having been torn apart by a monster.

It was too much for me, so I placed my gray, rat-man-made cloak, used for protecting against rain (it was also water and fire resistant to some extent.), around the child.

Well then, what should we do now?

Just when I was pondering about what to do with the thirteen slave girls in front of me, Louise arrived.

“So, you were here? I managed to get an insane amount of meat and pelts, so if it’s fine by you, I’ll put them on the wag....”

Once she got silent, she threw a glance at the slave girls, drew near to me and stared into my face.

What’s this? Please don’t look at me with that much pressure while staying silent.

“I was given these slaves as a reward. They all have become members of my trading company.”

“Hmm, then, do you plan to buy a large pot?”

Saying so, Louise put an implicit smile on her face, as if recalling something interesting.

Like always, I couldn’t understand Louise-nee-san’s words and conduct that well.

Well, I guess it’s Louise, so what she says must bear some meaning.

Like always, Louise didn’t care to explain things to me, so I went out to buy a large pot, like she had suggested, and helped her with carrying the meat and pelts.

The slave girls followed our covered wagon in succession.

For the time being, they didn't try to run away despite them being no longer bound by chains.

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We returned back to the field where the battle took place a moment ago. It looked even more tragic than after the fierce battle when it was filled with corpses.

According to what the garrison has said, things were put in order as soon as they carried out a burial for the dead merchants, but.....

What I saw now was a bizarre scene of green and earth colored skins lining up in a row.

Thanks to Louise's master class dismantling skill, the skins were neatly dried and set up without a gram of waste.

Next to that, there was a heap of pink colored internal organs that resembled a mountain.

Seeing that, I recalled the view of a dissected frog and felt some disgust.

For some reason, the neatly arranged humanoid skins felt more gross than a splattered pool of blood.

Just what kind of tools can you make from those skins?

Well, whatever, I'll use their extractable fat to make soap.

"I talked the garrison into giving us the wooden clubs from the monsters, whereas, they can have their swords."

It looks like the wooden clubs swung by the ogres came in handy just the right time, as we can make them into firewood.

As expected, the garrison didn't express the desire to keep the ogres' meat.

Taking ash from the burnt firewood, we can use it as a soap material without any waste.

As one would expect from the big sis Louise.

“Let’s quickly put these organs into the pot.”

Yes yes, I knew this would happen.

Louise’s favorite food was monster organs.

She skillfully fixed the pot on an ogre’s large wooden club and made a bonfire. The organs boiled well while simmering.

Being at a loose end, the slave girls only watched her cooking.

—The slaves won’t move less they’re given an order—

Lyle-sensei gave me this advice in a casual manner.

It feels kinda weird, so I’d rather you stop blowing into my ear.

Still, the real me wanted him do it much more. Sensei smelled nice, which made me thrilled.

A young man’s heart is a complicated thing.

Ah, that’s right. If I don’t give them an order,

“Everyone! Right now, let’s go search for burnable things in this surroundings, like withered grass or wooden pieces. It’s dangerous, so don’t go anywhere outside the range of view.”

There were no trees growing in this wasteland, but, you could at least find small wooden pieces here for fuel.

As I commanded the girls and searched together, I recalled the day I first met Louise.

Back then, it wasn't that bad, as the monsters were those crazy dogs, but, now I was reluctant about eating these humanoid monster organs.

For the sake of surviving in this world, I guess it can't be helped.

Once we collected enough firewood and returned, a soup made from the ogres' organs was done.

It was a simple dish made from water, meat, organs, and salt, but, it gave out quite a delicious smell, which was scary.

However, won't these organs, belonging to the ogre race, upset my stomach?

'Lend me an antidote.' – When I pointed that out, Louise ordered me.

Just as being told, I handed over one of my antidotes.

'This should do.' – Louise replied this way as she poured in the potion into the large pot.

The cooking has become way too hearty.

And then, everyone proceeded with eating the food.

Because we had no spare wooden plates, we decided on the order when eating.

I was fine with being the last, as I was quite reluctant about eating meat from a humanoid monster, but nevertheless, the slave girls didn't appear to have such reservations.

They were gladly eating their portions.

I wonder if they're hungry.

Judging from their waiting look, they were drooling all over that food.

Somehow, I felt pity for them, but, I wondered to myself about how to cheer them up.

As soon as everyone finished their meal, it became night.

We had yet to process the skins and make dried meat, so we couldn't leave these things behind. Therefore, we decided to camp here tonight around this bonfire.

I think you could say we were eating out of the same pot.

Surrounding a pot and collecting firewood together, the girls' stiff expressions lightened up.

Perhaps, they finally became able to accustom themselves to their new surroundings and calm down.

Thinking it was a good opportunity, I talked with everyone in an easy-to-understand manner.

About the purpose of the Sawatari Trading Company, and about us creating and merchandising soap and gunpowder.

I told everyone I wanted them to assist me with making and selling the soap for the time being.

I would teach them from scratch, so it wasn't that hard.

And if they did their job properly, I would provide them with life necessities.

I wonder if this much of information will be enough for now. I turned anxious, as everyone kept silent. I wonder if they were listening to me.

Lastly, I asked them if there was anything they were troubled about, wanted to say, or didn't understand, and urged them to speak.

"U, Umm....I'm, a slave, trader."

Among the slave girls, a single girl with exceptionally big eyes raised her hand. I shivered because of that sudden response.

"Ah no, saying that you're a slave trader. I'd say you're the ones that are for sale."

I thought she was a dunce, so I quickly retorted, but, my retort too, sounded quite harsh.

"No, uhm....that's, not what I mean. I, was, before, becoming a slave, a daughter of a trader."

For some reason, the girl with big amber eyes seemed to have difficulty expressing herself.

Ah, but somehow, I could understand this difficult feeling quite well.

During one summer vacation, I'd become a shut-in and play games the whole

time. I'd rarely go outside, and when a clerk in a convenient store asked me if I wanted to warm my meal, my voice would turn hoarse, making me unable to express myself.

Certainly, I would've probably been told I hadn't been talking for a long time. If people don't talk, they will forget how to do it.

"Is that so? So you have experience in commerce, right?"

"Our shop, was attacked by thieves.... so our business became insolvent, and everyone in my family was sold."

Uwaa, that's some heavy topic. I don't know what to say to make it right.

"If Master, sama, wants to trade, I can help with calculations."

"Is that so? So you're saying you can help me with accounting?"

"Yes....."

Did she think our discussion was finally over? The slave trader-chan sat down, looking completely exhausted.

Following that, the other slave girls began to talk about their circumstances chronologically before being enslaved.

Insolvency, business failure, deception, betrayal, family breakup, their talks covered these topics.

Without holding back, everyone described their miserable, harsh life, which

made me become speechless.

While we are at it, based on all the girls' stories, 1 of them was a daughter of a trader, 2 of them – daughters of soldiers, 1 – of a flower vendor's, 1 – of a miner's, 1 – of a baker's, 1 – of a prostitute, and the remaining 6 – of beggars.

Almost half of them were children of beggars, which was a surprising number, and at the same time, a cruel thing to me.

I guess what Lyle-sensei said about slaves becoming beggars once they're released from their duties was true.

Afterwards, Louise, who had been silent the whole time, changed her expression and began to question the two slaves with the soldier parents as she heard about their life stories. I was surprised by her.

It was rare for the usually calm Louise to become this emotional, to the extent of her voice trembling when she spoke.

Apparently, the two aforementioned slaves were daughters of soldiers who had been stationed in the royal capital. Their parents were involved in some sort of factional dispute or power struggle; punished for no particular wrongdoing; and reduced, as a whole family, to being slaves.

Truly, there were lots of heart-breaking stories.

Louise, whose face was gloomy, finished listening to them and said:

“I'll take care of these two.”

Making such a decision without asking me, who was their master, first, it was

much like the big sis Louise.

That's fine by me, however, who would've thought she would have taken this much of an interest in the slaves.

It would be nice if Louise could tell me why she suddenly became this enthusiastic, but, whatever.

"I intend to raise these two into warriors, but, do you mind that?"

"Well, I don't particularly mind, but still..."

Was it because I gave her my permission? Louise handed them swords in a bombastic way.

Somehow, even warriors seemed to be obliged to have some manners, so the two slaves accepted Louise's short swords with trembling hands while kneeling.

Lyle-sensei laughed after hearing Louise's talk.

"Then, shall I teach this flower girl some pharmaceuticals?"

Is what he said.

"Choosing wildflowers is quite similar to distinguishing medicinal plants, you see. Perhaps, this girl has an aptitude for pharmaceuticals. What's more, it may be just my imagination, but she seems to be....."

Looking fixedly at the flower girl, Lyle-sensei hesitated to say something.

“Is there something you’re concerned about?”

“No, perhaps the medicinal and wild plants won’t sell for as much as the soap, but, the more choices we have, the better our trade will be.”

Walking around the plains shouldn’t be that dangerous, since the two girls will tag along Louise.

Certainly, I was curious about the way to pick out plants, but maybe another time.

Well, does that mean I too should be doing my job?

I have to make soap and collect niter in this surroundings, otherwise, we won’t meet the demand.

“Well then, I’ll be teaching the rest how to make things, like soap.”

There’s a variety of materials that can be used for making soap, but, I’ve yet to carry it out in practice to see if the fat from ogres can be utilized.

Like this, The Sawatari Trading Company commenced its activity.

Notes and References:

A simple type of clothing consisting of a large piece of cloth with a hole in the middle for the head.

Chapter 8 – The Company’s Initial, Hard Struggles

“Hmm, morning already....?”

The red, morning sun was ascending from the other side of horizon.

The thirteen slave girls curled up while sleeping, as if drawing a circle around the small campfire.

Could it be that we camped outside without returning back to the inn yesterday?

I enjoyed camping like it’s supposed to be, but my body wasn’t used to it.

Today, we are lucky, as the weather is clear, but, it could’ve been a different story had it rained.

Was she doing some morning practice? Louise, who had woken up earlier than me, was swinging her saber while reheating yesterday’s soup with more meat added.

Once we finished the breakfast and woke up the children, everyone looked to be still craving for food. That’s good, otherwise, they wouldn’t be able to work.

Watching these girls eating, I thought I had to provide them with bedding, in addition to food.

I shall teach them how to produce soap.

Anyways, money is what is needed in order to advance, so I had to focus on earning more income.

The slave girls aren't used to making soap.

Teaching something requires perseverance, so there's a high chance I might not succeed.

However, failing to make a product, like detergent, doesn't necessarily mean it will go to waste. Not to mention, if the number of workers increases, our job will progress significantly.

Why didn't this idea cross my mind earlier? – I lamented.

Louise, brought her two disciples with her and went hunting for food and the raw materials for making soap.

Following that, Lyle-sensei took the flower girl with him and searched for herbs, edible wild grasses, and firewood, needed for both preparing food and composing the scum for soap.

At the very least, two weeks are necessary for producing soap.

I wanted to improve the quality of the soaps by letting them rest and dry for a bit longer, but I had the feeling I needed money as fast as possible.

I know that this may sound rude, but right now, my income depends solely on how well Louise and her disciples can hunt monsters.

For some reason, I have been constantly protected from the hostile surroundings by Louise and am indebted to her. Nevertheless, you could say this is an obvious thing when it comes to trading, no?

Having her pass to me all her earnings without any complaint, I felt there was no excuse for me.

“And I also need to pay the rent for borrowing the Rhod's horse....”

I decided to return my favors owed by tenfold to everyone once our business has started to thrive, so I bought up daily necessities for that to happen.

These will become necessary for our initial investment.

“Everyone, gather!”

The girls gathered after I gave them the signal to stop their tasks.

First, I decided to wash them clean.

With these dirty-looking appearances, they wouldn't even become shop assistants.

Despite saying so, there were other things that required money, so, I didn't have the sufficient budget for letting everyone here enter a bathhouse.

That's why, I decided to put up a tent in the wasteland outside the city and groom them there.

“Sensei, I'm relying on you.”

“Ahaha, you sure are a slave driver, aren't you? Right. Come, water!”

Lyle-sensei's magic, which is water based, can absorb water from the atmosphere, so it's pretty convenient.

Perhaps, I should create a water supply with his magic?

The moment Sensei drew water into a large pot, we heated it using firewood.

After that, Louise transferred the hot water into wooden buckets.

Lyle-sensei and I distributed the steaming, hot water between the children and proceed to clean them.

“Hey, we’re going to start from your hair, so take off your clothes.”

“Umm, but, Master, isn’t this, one of your precious goods for sale....?”

As I used a bar of soap and produced foam, one of the girls became modest. Somehow, her modesty didn’t feel like that of a child.

“Don’t be reserved. You won’t be able to do business, less you take care of your appearance and make yourself pretty, right?”

“I guess, master is right. I’m sorry for that..... and, thank you for using this expensive item on me.”

This slave with the amber colored eyes was the first girl to offer me help with my business.

It may be that she wanted to become useful by doing commerce, since she had previously been a child from a family of traders.

I was troubled by her weird sense of obligation, but, being able to tell the value of this soap I was wasting on her, perhaps I could expect something from her in the future.

‘Now that you feel indebted to me, you better earn to pay it off’ – I neatly washed her hair while having this wicked thought.

I had never used a bar of soap before, despite having seen it, as I belonged to those who would bath themselves with body soaps. However, being able to use

this solid soap for the first time since I arrived in this world, I was surprised to see how well it foamed.

Well, maybe it's because the soap uses natural components.

One of its materials is a monster, but still....

As the other girls' hair got washed, the gray dirt sticking to them gradually fell off and their hair recovered their base color.

I could tell that the one I was in charge of had orange as its base color.

And then, a pair of ears slipped out abruptly from within her hair.

Eh, what's that, ears?

"Ah, I'm sorry, my ears suddenly popped out. It's difficult to wash my head with them sticking out, right?"

"Ah no, that's fine. More importantly...."

Once I brushed up her hair, there was a pair of human ears located in its proper spot. However, besides them, there was one more pair of animal ears attached to her head.

I'm aware that everything is possible in a fantasy world, but, having two pairs of ears, just what's the meaning of this?

"Oh my~, looks like I was right about this child."

Lyle-sensei gazed at the girl with a sidelong glance and said as if being curious.

"What do you mean, Lyle-sensei?"

“That girl, if I look more closely, she also has some hair on her back. I thought it was weird for her to have these long, thick limbs in comparison to her petite trunk, therefore....”

“Therefore?”

“Most likely, she’s got some animal blood mixed in, about a quarter, I think. The shape of her ears is similar to that of dogs.”

Lyle-sensei stopped washing others and traced the girl’s ears with his finger, after which he gave a detailed explanation.

The young girl seemed to possess the blood of the so-called beastman. In addition to the hair on her back, there was a small tail glued around the tailbone of her bottom.

When it comes to animal ears, I’d say it’s similar to a situation where you discover a beast that had previously snuck into your cart while you were peddling your wares.

No, wouldn’t that be rather a play of a god? I wasn’t all that excited, since I wasn’t a kemono, but I thought it could be an interesting thing.

Apparently, various beastman species exist in this world, such as dogs, cats, wolves, and lions.

It seems it’s not strange for them to mate with humans, so, it’s possible to have individuals with mixed blood, such as this one.

Such an occurrence is incredibly rare to me, but well, I guess I can’t be just surprised at everything here. After all, this is a fantasy world.

If I were to describe a cat-type race, what comes to my mind as first is a robot, rather than a beast.

“Still, what did you mean by saying you were right?”

“A child that possess mixed blood, tends to mature fast, therefore, it will grow into an adult very quickly. Her body is still intact, so she will gain an even higher evaluation as a slave.”

‘Tends to mature fast, heh...?’ Is what I thought. I looked at that still petite body of her.

It didn’t look like she would grow fast anytime, but...

Being told by Sensei, I was able to notice the difference in the girl’s limbs and body. She was a skinny person with thin flesh.

Ah, there’s a scar on her body. I’m going to apply some previously boiled herbs onto her, later.

“Despite you saying she matures fast, it doesn’t look like she’s growing that much.”

“She won’t grow, unless you provide her with enough nourishment. For a beastman to mature properly, you need to feed it lots of food, so you better be prepared for the incoming food expenditures.”

“That’s, well, about feeding, shouldn’t it be fine if she works for that?”

“So I guess, Takeru-dono is planning to make her a focal point of the company. It’s really convenient to have her grow faster than other girls, right?”

“I guess so....”

Lyle-sensei said so as if seeing through my feelings.

Surely, I wondered myself if this girl could become our salesperson, if she could do calculations.

Nevertheless, I didn’t want to say that directly, as it sounded like I was treating a human being as a pawn.

“Hmm, I guess it was reckless by the slave traders for not noticing a slave possessing the mixed blood of a human and a beastman. Still, you too, couldn’t you have avoided being sent to the mine, had you shown them your ears?”

At Lyle-sensei’s question, the trader’s daughter replied little by little.

“That’s because, I didn’t care to live, any longer.”

The atmosphere has suddenly become heavier!

I didn’t know what to say, so as to cheer her up, so I couldn’t say anything. The girl looked in my eyes and added something by muttering these few words.

“But now, it’s different, I want to live.”

“That’s the important part, right?”

One could feel strength in her voice. That’s a good thing.

I too, thought about wanting to live when I was about to die back when I first came to this world.

Indeed, it was a peculiar type of shock therapy.

‘I want to live’ – nothing will change until you think that way.

I combed her long hair that regained its vivid-like, sunset color. While doing so, I felt deep sympathy toward the other girls’ circumstances out of line and made up my mind to figure out something.

I was by no means a virtuous person, but, neither did I like to be a hypocrite.

Still, how should I say it.... these girls' circumstances were so pitiful, I was taken aback.

Despite making this girl with animal ears undress and washing her body, I felt no lust at all.

It's because I was neither a kemono(1) nor some kind of gentleman with a lolita complex.

I didn't want to explain myself too much, but upon seeing these girls' naked bodies, I could understand the meaning behind Lyle-sensei's words when he had said they wouldn't even amount to being sold to a brothel.

Judging from the ribs surfacing on their underweight bodies and their skins covered in bruises, I could tell they had gone through a very severe life.

This was so pitiful, I couldn't even bring myself to feel any lust.

Luckily, we had enough soaps and herbs for sale, so after washing their bruises we proceeded to heal them.

All of the slaves are girls, so it will be better if there are no scars left.

Well then, now that we made them clean, there's no longer any need for them to wear those old rags.

Sensei and I prepared new clothes for the girls, which we then made them change into.

"Uwaa~!"

"Master, thank you, for these pretty clothes."

The slave girls raised voices of joy and gratitude, which made me put on

triumphant airs.

What we prepared for the girls were sets of apron dresses.

I thought they would look like Alice from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, so I purchased a large number of these clothes.

As one would expect, it's important to emphasize the visual aspect, so I had to stress their cuteness.

These children clothes, which I bought for the girls, gave a high impression about them. However, it was thanks to this city's production area that used woolen fabric based on Est's goats, as well as the city's vigorous distribution of clothes, that I was able to purchase them at a cheap price.

For some reason, there were only red colored apron dresses on sale.

'Ah, could it be because of the ruler's taste?'- I thought so, but, I saw no problem in these work clothes.

Naturally, I also bought the girls lingerie to match their clothes.

I thought about collecting their old tattered clothes, wash them, and weave into a temporary store tent, but, as I tried to collect the clothes, a small problem arose.

The girl whom I had lent my raincoat to before, due to her clothes being far too torn, wouldn't let it go, claiming it was something she had received.

Certainly, if I'm not wrong, this girl is one of the soldiers' daughters.

I would feel sorry if I took it against her will, so I ended up distributing gray ratman-made cloaks to everyone.

"Again, I was able to avoid unnecessary costs...."

Rain gear is also necessary, considering the fact they might have to work

outside. Perhaps, we can call this a part of our initial investment as well?

Judging from what I've heard from Louise, it appears that a master of a guild is obliged to provide each of his apprentices with a set of clothes and a pair of boots as a present. Providing one's subordinates with necessities is the duty of an employer, so it can't be helped.

Hiring people is a greatly troublesome thing.

The money was steadily decreasing in my wallet.

While we are at it, I began asking the girls about their names and races after we had finished bathing them, and so,

Sharon, daughter of a trader (Race: A quarter beastman from a dog-type animal tribe.)

Suzanne & Claudia, daughters of soldiers.

Viola, daughter of a flower vendor (Race: A half nymph.)

Laure, daughter of a miner (Race: dwarf)

Colette, daughter of a baker.

Flora, daughter of a harlot.

And Eliza, Melissa, Ginny, Laure, Liddy, Paula, daughters of beggars.

However, despite me asking them, it didn't look like I could memorize all their names.

I managed to remember Sharon, so perhaps I'll be able to learn other names gradually.

The half nymph, named Viola, seemed to possess mixed blood from a water fairy. She was a girl with blue eyes and hair.

When I looked closely, I noticed she had pointy ears, which made me wonder if she wasn't an elf. As I asked Lyle-sensei about that, he gave me this explanation.

"Just because someone has pointy ears, doesn't make them an elf. Also, elves have a light complexion. By the way, dwarves, who possess a dark complexion, also have pointy ears. Generally, everyone related to those beings have pointy ears."

"They, don't look to be that much different from humans, still...."

Certainly, Laure, who is a dwarf, also has pointy ears. However, apart from her red copper hair, which is rare in this area, and her brown colored skin, she doesn't look all that different from a human.

If I were to say, I'd have imagined a dwarf as a being with a slightly firm body and short height.

"When a dwarf becomes an adult, its face will bear special features, however, in the case of female dwarves, their faces aren't that different from humans. Dwarves are known for their strength and firmness, and for having skillful hands, therefore, they're fit to become a miner or a blacksmith. Nevertheless, I'm afraid, female dwarves are bound to live as slaves, as they lack the strength required for physical jobs.....

"I see. So it was like that?"

The reason why this girl was made into a mining slave and was soon going to be worked to death was probably due to her low value.

Be it Laure, the dwarf, or Viola, the half nymph, I think both of them are incredibly cute. Still, unlike a full-fledged elf that can be sold to a brothel for an extra-high price, a nymph, even if it's a half, doesn't seem to be popular among the people, despite both of them coming from the same family.

Apparently, around these parts, water spirits are treated as demons that kill people by pulling them into a pond or by crying in front of their houses. Because of that, they're regarded as beings carrying misfortune and discriminated against.

According to Lyle-sensei, 'most of these theories are baseless rumors.'

Uhmhm, so does it mean, some of them are true?

"Still, Lyle-sensei, for there to be a half nymph and half human, that's to say...."

"It's very fascinating, isn't it? I think it's rare for nymphs to mate with humans. Also, this is the reason why humans are afraid of them, but, nymphs are born with a divine protection coming from a water spirit. It's possible that Viola won't be welcomed by local people if we appoint her as a shop assistant, but she's apt to use water-based magic, so she might actually become useful."

I see.

Does Sensei mean to say he will teach Viola herbal medicine?

Apparently, Lyle-sensei, who is a middle class magic user, can feel the presence of magic within people, so it's likely he was able to sense something coming from Viola.

Still, as expected, it would be a bad thing for a flower vendor girl to be hated just because she was a nymph.

Everyone probably had their own circumstances as slaves.

Once I looked in Viola's direction, she was grabbing the hem of her apron dress while slightly trembling.

With just my impudent look, her blue eyes turned wet, as if wanting to cry.

I was bit scared off, as I had just heard a person would be killed when a nymph cries.

It's probably just one of those urban legends, but..... no good, no good, if I believe that, she will think I'm discriminating against her.

I wondered myself whether words of consolation would cheer her up.

However, I would just worsen the situation, were I to make Viola afraid of me, so I decided to entrust her to Lyle-sensei.

I too, want to cure myself of being worthless, but it doesn't seem to be going well, I guess.

Chapter 9 – A Day off in Losgow

“As expected, I can do nothing but increase the production of gunpowder.”

I didn't know how much time it would take to stabilize my company so that it could safely cover the living costs of the girls, were I to sell only soap.

Even soap takes lots of time and effort to be made, but, more importantly, I realized I could raise my funds by increasing the production of gunpowder.

For the time being, I managed to improve our living conditions in the camp a bit, but, even there, it will be hard for us to live like this for a long time.

I want to quickly build a shop with a firm floor and roof.

Luckily, there seemed to be a fair demand for bombs used for blasting purposes. A new order came from Nattal from the Losgow mine, whereas, the Earl, Donovan, wanted to buy some firecrackers.

As for the Earl, he saw me become desperate in searching for means to raise money, so he's most likely doing this out of sympathy.

Well, anyway, if they want the gunpowder, then the only problem will be producing niter.

I need more niter, more soil with the fermented dungs of animals in it!

Louise, together with her apprentices, Suzanne & Claudia, will be in charge of supplying us with materials while making a living by doing monster quests near the city of Est, whereas, Lyle-sensei(?) and Viola will go pick herbs.

I had to choose people from out of my soap making group and form a new one that will be producing niter.

“Master, I’ll do it.”

“Laure? However, you know that making niter is quite hard in comparison with soap, right?”

The process of making niter is simple, you could say.

You collect soil containing appropriately aged dung from an animal huts and boil it together with potassium carbonate (Yes, it’s the familiar scum that you use for creating soap) inside a hole in the ground or under the floor, where light doesn’t reach. After that, you concentrate the mixture, crystalize it, then melt and boil it again, after which you crystalize the niter.

Nevertheless, despite the process sounding simple, the actual labor is much more troublesome.

Carrying large amounts of soil, mixing it with water, and boiling, just how much effort would it take?

For a young girl, it was quite a harsh job.

What's more, in addition to drying up the soil, you had to gather human and animal dung, and even build a small hut for collecting niter at the same time.

It's a job that consists of smell, dirt, and many labor pains.

"I can do it if you tell me how it works."

"Hmm, well then, I'll try and teach you, so I'm relying on you."

The copper-red haired and brown skinned Laure is a daughter of a miner.

She is also a dwarf (from black spirits) with a height shorter than other girls and pointed ears.

I've heard about female dwarves being physically more inferior to males, but, among all the girls here, she's probably the only one suitable for this job.

Upon teaching her, she generally grasped which soil she should collect and what the process of making niter is. Laure wasn't quick witted, but, she would do her job calmly and steadily while working twice as hard as others.

Whether she did good or bad, she was the type of person that would immerse herself in her job without looking aside, so perhaps, she could cope with this job of making niter that required lots of perseverance.

Later, I'll create a line of production for niter and entrust the rest to Laure.

If she can do her job well, I shall praise her. However, even if she doesn't, I won't get mad.

I entrusted Laure with making niter and decided to return back to Losgow for now together with Lyle-sensei.

Loading our covered wagon with niter and goods, which the village was lacking of (such as cloths, salt and miscellaneous), we set off for a one day visit.

I was worried, since I would be leaving the girls in charge of the company, but, I made a request to Louise to protect them, as she seemed to be dependable.

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As soon as we arrived in Losgow, we offloaded the items at a general store, after which I took the wagon and headed towards the Rhod family.

Once we stopped in front of this somewhat nostalgic farm, a blonde haired girl came out to meet us. I quickly apologized.

“Sorry, Sara-chan. It looks like I've been borrowing your horse for quite a while. Later, I'll make it up by paying you lots of money, therefore....

“We don't particularly mind about the horse. We only use it during the growing season, so you saved us the cost of feeding it. More importantly, I'd rather have Takeru apologize for constantly using my Sensei, you see.”

Saying that, Sara-chan made a smile of satisfaction.

Did she treat Lyle-sensei too, as some kind of belonging? I was surprised by such a possibility.

Well, to begin with, it's Sara-chan's Sensei, so taking him away from her would be a bad thing, I think.

I'm sure Sensei is currently catching up on the paperwork that had accumulated during his absence, but...

"If you hadn't brought Sensei with you, I would've been able to study letters."

"I see. In that case, I'll give you lots of homework this time."

"Ah, Lyle-sensei."

"Gah!"

I turned my face toward Lyle-sensei's clear voice who had immediately caught up with me.

"Sensei, have you finished sorting the documents?"

"Sorting the documents and sending them to the capital didn't even take five minutes. Recently, I've become unable to understand my purpose here, you see."

The very capable Sensei, made a bit of a lonesome expression while saying so.

I guess, you could say that working in an office inside a village is similar to being demoted for him.

“Still, I didn’t know Sara-chan was this keen on learning. It makes me proud as her teacher, you see. I’m going to give her lots of homework.”

“Uwaaa, save meee.”

Sara-chan dashed inside her house as if trying to run away.

After all, she’s still a child, I guess.

For some reason, things have settled down since I arrived here.

Even though working on a plantation is severe, a farming village is quite tranquil in comparison with the hectic city of Est.

I felt the urge of wanting to rest here now.

However, it wasn’t the right time for that.

I had to collect sulfur, create bombs, and deliver the goods to the mine.

I too, had become occupied with lots of things.

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“Goodness me, your bombs are excellent indeed. Our work has been greatly progressing thanks to them.”

What reached me first was the voice of Nattal, the Losgow mine governor, whom I hadn’t met in a long time.

I brought him bombs made from niter, which I had previously carried to this village. As I did so, I was handed over a full sack of Silesian golden coins.

Was he at the mining site again? As always, he looked muscular while being half-naked.

I wonder if he’s always dressed like this.

“With these, we can blow apart even that hard bedrock that’s impossible to be broken with a miner’s hands. Normally, we would’ve had to call a high class magic user to pierce through that thing, so if we consider the time for waiting, even one gold coin is cheap.”

It looks like Nattal has worked out the best way to utilize the bombs and is now showing it in practice.

“I also showed my fellow engineers from other mines how the bombs work, but, they were curious to try out the bombs themselves.”

“Is that so? I’m glad to hear that.”

I was grateful to Nattal, since I was worried if he wouldn’t try to promote himself thanks to his influence.

No matter how much money it is, having a demand is important at the early stage of a company.

“Later, if you want to sell your bombs to the state mines, I think it’s safe to go along the Ye mountain range. However, if you plan to visit the royal capital, you better pay enough attention, even to the road.”

On my way back, I was given such a piece of advice by Nattal.

I had nothing in particular to do in the royal capital, but, Nattal’s comment made me a bit curious.

“What do you mean?”

“Apparently, monsters have become more active near the royal capital for some reason. Even among the merchants, there are rumors about that place being dangerous.”

“Ah, now that you mention it, I think I’ve heard about the royal capital becoming boisterous.”

“Even the kingdom’s chivalric order has had a hard time protecting their territories. I would still understand if it was just a caravan of merchants getting

destroyed, but, there's even been rumors about groups of bandits getting caught up in monsters' attacks, so you should consider it a serious threat."

I think that the rumor about the bandits, who prey on merchants, isn't that bad, but, monsters becoming active is a scary thing indeed.

'I wonder what the reason for that is.' – I became a bit curious.

If we go with that theory, it's possible the environment will be destroyed or something like that.

It wasn't related to me, since I didn't plan to leave the peaceful city of Est for the time being, but.....

While thinking so, I recalled something.

"Lyle-sensei, about the herd of monsters that attacked the merchants and slaves nearby Est."

"That's right. Their trip was probably delayed due to the sudden outbreak of monsters outside the royal capital. Even if it's not related to us, it's better to pay more attention."

Lyle-sensei too, seemed to ponder for a while.

As expected, do we need to strengthen our fighting strength even though we have just started to make a living from trading?

As I thought, this world is indeed harsh.

However, I've become robust to that. I also noticed that those who are troubled will become a source of income in this world's economy.

Taking into account the number that can be hunted, I became able to see monsters as a source of income.

"Speaking of which, I want to make this, but, I wonder if it can be crafted by someone who's a blacksmith here."

Taking into consideration a plan to enhance our fighting strength, I decided to show Nattal some of my blueprints containing ideas I had thought of.

Following the production of gunpowder and bombs, I immediately came up with guns and cannons.

I was a bit reluctant about introducing this technology, which brought damage upon my world during wars, into this world.

Nevertheless, for the sake of protecting myself from those monsters, I, who possessed no magic power whatsoever, wanted those firearms.

"What's this, a hole made inside an iron rod....?"

"By detonating the gunpowder placed inside that hole, you can fire a lead ball straightly, using the force of the explosion."

“Hmm, do we need to make something as dull as this?”

‘If you want to attack an enemy, shouldn’t it be fine to throw these bombs directly at them?’ – Is what Nattal wanted to say.

Since Nattal was just an engineer, he probably couldn’t imagine how effective a gun and cannon are.

Well, if I hadn’t witnessed the real things myself or learned about their history, I too would probably have had the same impression as Nattal.

“For example, there should be those catapults in this world. The cannon, which I mentioned, can fire a large iron ball a far longer distance than a catapult. How about that?”

“Despite you telling me so, it’s still hard for me to imagine. As long you pay the necessary expense, I don’t mind asking a blacksmith to craft the tube and balls, but, he might have never heard or seen something like this, so it might take him some..... no, actually, quite a bit of time to make these.”

Nattal wasn’t sure about this himself, but, Lyle-sensei, who stood next to me while listening, had his face turn pale as he snatched away my blueprint and looked at it intensely.

As expected of Lyle-sensei’s cheater detecting sense, could it be that he quickly understood my intention?

“Governor Dacole-dono! I’d like to ask you to manufacture these things, but, please do so using your utmost power.”

“O, Oh. Fine by me, however, was Secretary Laertius always this ardent?”

Even if you ask me that, I don’t know.

Nattal, seemed to be surprised from witnessing Lyle-sensei’s rare emotions.

‘If we manage to make these, the whole concept of wars will be turned upside down.....’ – Lyle-sensei, whose face was unusually stern, gazed even more at that clumsily drawn blueprint of mine while muttering these words.

I’m glad he can understand it, but still...

No matter how much it was, Sensei’s conjecture was way too sharp for someone coming from this world, which made me pull back.

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Having concluded our sale, we went to the Rhod family and took a breather there.

I paid them a generous amount of money for lending me the horse, since I made quite a lot thanks to my previous transaction.

I can buy whatever I want without having to worry about money for now.

“I think I’ve already told you not to fret about the horse, but, how long do you

plan on staying here?”

“Eh, so I’m being a nuisance to you?”

Being told like that by Sara-chan, I was a bit shocked.

I thought I had already become a part of this family, but, I guess I’m still an unwanted laborer.

“That’s wro...that’s not what I mean. You are always welcomed here.”

“Well, it’s about time I should check on the company in Est, so I was thinking if I shouldn’t go back soon.”

“Hmph, is that what you mean.....?”

I wonder if Sara-chan was in a bad mood. For some reason, it felt that way.

Well, after all, I was about to take Lyle-sensei with me at my own convenience.

“Ahh, that’s right. I bought this gift for you, Sara-chan. If it’s fine by you, please try it on.”

“Oh my, this dress from Est is indeed lovely. Aren’t you quite thoughtful, Takeru?”

What I gave her was a red apron dress bought in Est (child sized).

I thought it would suit Sara-chan, so I bought an extra set.

I also thought ahead and deemed it was necessary for me to have this family cooperate with me. They were a family that raised cattle, so they could supply me with soil and materials for making niter.

Like this, I made yet another future investment and also was able to put Sara-chan back in a good mood.

“Also, I brought you some drink called coffee, but....”

“What’s this? It’s bitter, so I don’t need.”

Just as I thought, she doesn’t like it.

Uhaha, it can’t be helped. After all, she’s still a child.

I too, used to consider bitter drinks in the same way when I was small.

Later, I would drink coffee after adding milk and sugar, however, I soon realized that black coffee suited my taste much more.

“Apparently, coffee has become popular in the royal capital and is drunk by everyone from noble families.”

“Ehh? Is that true?”

Sara-chan was a self-interested person, so as soon she heard about that, she decided to give her best and try to drink the coffee.

“How about you start drinking it by adding sugar and milk?”

“Well, if it’s too sweet, it won’t do as well, but..... this one is bitter.”

Could it be that Sara-chan is longing for city life in her own childish way?

The coffee that I told her about was a café au lait, but even so, she tried to drink it with a painful expression.

“That’s right, Takeru. It’s been a while since we last went to a hot spring. Shall we go again?”

“Ahhh, that’s sound like a good idea.”

As expected, perhaps, it was the best thing to do to recover from exhaustion.

Well, in any case, it meant I’d be in charge of digging a spring once again, but...

I tried to ask her something that had been on my mind since before, when we spent our time together inside the spring.

“Hey, don’t you wear underwear?”

“Honestly, nobody in this village does such a thing.”

No no, that’s probably not true.

Is it because she’s a child that she isn’t aware of such things yet?

There’s bound to be lots of complications if a girl doesn’t wear underwear, but...

Well, she seemed to be pleased with my gift, so I thought maybe I should buy her a pair of underwear the next time we meet

Once I fully recharge my batteries at the spring, we’ll proceed to leaving the village.

Looking around the general stores and secondhand shops in Losgow, I worked out what we should bring to replenish the village’s stock when we come here next time.

For some reason, goods here were overly expensive, as the stock was short of items. Perhaps, it could have something to do with the goods distribution being delayed, due to the increased activity of monsters near the road leading to the royal capital.

Thanks to that, I managed to sell the cargo, which I had carried here with me, at a high price, however, I was a bit concerned about the market being slightly

in unrest.

As expected, what we would carry with us from Losgow would be iron-made goods.

Later, I thought about collecting large amounts of sulfur from hot springs, which is needed to make gunpowder.

Lyle-sensei and I set off back to the city of Est.

Chapter 10 – The Completion of the Company's New Building

I've heard the rumor about the increase of monsters near the royal capital.

With Louise being absent as my front guard, is it finally my turn to become the target?

I've secretly been practicing my swordsmanship, so that I will be able to fight one day, but I had no chance to show off my skill while we were traveling to Est.

I saw other merchants going back and forth on their carts, so rather than Est, it was more likely the royal capital had been thriving more in trade.(1)

"Master, welcome back."

Sharon, who had been fulfilling her role as a shop assistant in the Sawatari Trading Company (temporary store), greeted me with a smile.

"Are, Sharon, haven't you grown a bit taller?"

"Yes. I've been eating lots of food, just as master told me. That's why."

Sharon was quite smart, which runs contrary to the common image of a rough beastman from a fantasy world.

At first she was reserved to do so, but she ended up eating lots upon realizing the meaning behind my words. I told her that her quick growth was part of our initial investment, no matter how much her food expenditure would cost.

Sharon was also familiar with accounting, so when we checked on our earnings, it turned out we were in the black, as the monster soaps sold out completely as soon they had been made.

It looks like the more soap we make, the faster they sell.

We can sell plenty, based on the city's demand.

"Umm, Master, could it be that our soaps have been resold?"

"We can't deny such a possibility, I guess."

Most likely, the soaps had been resold, as a result of their pricing being too cheap, which is 1 silver coin.

I too, had noticed it.

However, I thought I couldn't care less about that, as my newly-established company had yet to find a new market in other cities.

That's because, I was grateful to the other trading companies for helping me spread my goods in other places.

Soap is a consumable good.

If the other companies decide to resell it at a higher price, then I'll surely be able to win in terms of price competition.

With my company selling the soap for 1 silver coin for now and other companies reselling it, I can reclaim the demand that has been dug up by others.

What I fear is that sooner or later some company might be able to copy my goods in this period, where product patents don't exist.

I also wondered if I would make this period regress, were I to let other companies benefit from reselling.

“As expected of Master-sama, I didn’t know you could anticipate this far into the future.”

“Sharon, you’re smart too. After all, you were able to notice our goods being resold and point that out to me.”

‘Good girl, good girl’ – I gently brushed Sharon’s light orange hair while praising her.

On the outside, Sharon’s hair looks no different from that of a human, but, whenever I try to brush her hair like this, I can sense a smooth feel, similar to that of touching a long haired dog’s back.

As I got carried away while stroking her hair, Sharon’s dog ears slipped out with a bounce, probably from her feeling good.

This is some interesting stuff.

Louise and her disciples seemed to still be out on the hunt.

I checked on the soaps that were being made inside our temporary tent shop.

At first, I thought that the soaps would be hard to produce, using these local monsters’ fat, but surprisingly their success rate turned out to be high.

The remaining thing would be to think of a way to utilize these skins, but I couldn’t come up with an idea.

It looks like I can only sell them like this to some leatherworker.

I parted myself with Lyle-sensei, who was confirming the content of Viola’s collected herbs, and went to check on Laure who was silently producing niter outside the city.

“Master-sama, I’ve only managed to make this much for today.”

“Yes, thank you for your hard work.”

When you boil soil mixed with animal dung inside a large pot, quite an odor can be smelled coming from it.

That's why this isn't the type of a labor you'd do inside a shop.

The inside of the cloth bag, which Laure had presented to me, was fully crammed with long and narrow, crystallized, white niter.

"Ohhh, you've done a great job. Do you want a reward from me?"

"Ummm, that's.... I'm fine as long Master-sama praises me."

Laure was saying some laudable things there.

I stroked her head and gave her some salty kitsu nuts mixed together with high-grade sugar, which I had previously pilfered from the Earl, Donovan. Laure seemed to be eating them quite eagerly.

Being able to replenish one's lost nutrients after a demanding labor is probably good for one's body.

However, it was different in the case of Laure, who was in charge of collecting one of the raw materials for gunpowder.

In addition to me being her breadwinner, I had to treat her appropriately.

"These are delicious."

"Is that so? Well, I think the taste is fair."

Laure was pleased with the food, however, the excess of sweetness and saltiness didn't look quite appetizing for me.

I myself wondered if I could make some delicious sweets using this fantasy world's poor ingredients.

On my way back to the company with Laure, we encountered Louise and her disciples, who had just finished their hunt.

If I remember correctly, were they Suzanne & Claudia? Suzanne was holding an iron spear, whereas, Claudia was equipped a shortsword and shortbow.

The reason why Louise had been in the vanguard was probably so as to separate the girls from being targeted and allow them to launch a range attack, as both were still lacking in experience.

Behind the three female warriors, there was Viola, who possessed no combat abilities, holding a basket full of gathered herbs and dry wood.

Not just herbs, but also wood costs quite a pretty penny even if it's just a piece of wood, as it usually tends to run out of stock. Therefore, Viola's job, though plain, was important.

That being said, it looks like Louise and the rest of her team had, once again, managed to hunt quite a bit, as Suzanne and Claudia were carrying heaps of animal pelts and skins on their backs.

What's more, Louise was shouldering a large pot while looking very delighted, as if preparing to cook something.

"Louise-san, are these....?"

"Our dinner for tonight. Today, we were able to harvest a great deal of fresh werewolves."

Ahh, so it's going to be a stew from monsters' organs again?

It seems that Louise perceived monsters as something to be harvested.

Certainly, if memory serves me right, werewolves are supposed to be quite strong....

Hmm, a meal consisting of organs isn't that awful, but I better tell the girls to

have some vegetables too, so as to balance their diet during their growth period.

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Night. We had a meal while surrounding the large pot placed on a campfire. In the meantime, I tried asking Louise about the monsters' recently increased activity, so as to see if I could get any more information about it.

“Certainly, I’ve heard about that.....”

Louise kept silent right after saying so. She was staring at the campfire’s light while deeply pondering about something.

It was very like her, who wasn’t sociable; however, Louise’s reaction felt somewhat different from the usual.

“Umm, Louise-san?”

“Ahh, sorry.....That’s right, even in Est, the number of monster quests has recently increased. Yesterday again, I received a request for cooperation from the city’s guild, as a caravan of merchants had been attacked at the outskirts. The main road leading to the royal capital has become quite dangerous as well.”

“What’s the reason for that?”

“.....”

Louise, again, kept silent.

“It may be because of the ‘miasmatic mana hole’ appearing outside the royal capital, you see.”

Just then, Lyle-sensei interjected.

“That ‘miasmatic mana hole’, is it similar to a dungeon?”

“It isn’t as big as a maze, but, how should I explain...?”

‘It’s something that’s been kept as a secret from the people by the kingdom, in order not to cause anxiety among them, but...’ – Sensei added that, after which he gave a detailed explanation.

“The miasmatic hole, which releases mana, has been sealed away once before by this country’s heroes, but for some reason, it seems to have reopened again. Monsters are generally considered to be magic beings, so they will become more active upon being flooded with mana.”

“Then, shouldn’t it be fine if we close it again?”

‘Don’t be silly!’ – As soon as I said so, I was scolded by Louise.

Umm, could it be that I said something to be mad about?

Louise, made an expression as if being surprised at herself for getting mad, after which she apologized.

“Sorry... even the kingdom’s chivalric order would fail to seal away that hole if they went there. With that powerful mana oozing out from there, adventurers would be terminated by strengthened monsters, even before drawing near to its entrance.”

So, it's that bad?

'Then, does it mean there's nothing I can do?' – I gave up immediately upon realizing that.

If someone as strong as like Louise was barely able to handle that, then it was all the more reason I could do nothing.

Right now, this part of the main road is safe, so there's no reason for us to fret.

While we are at it, apparently the cities and villages nearby the miasma hole have been destroyed by large numbers of spawned monsters.

And it seems that the kingdom's chivalric order and its soldiers have continued to fight desperately, trying to suppress the monsters and ward them off from reaching the royal capital and the main road.

I guess, you could say that a war has somewhat started.

I don't know if a hero or yuusha will eventually appear, since it's a fantasy world, but, if they do, they will most likely manage to seal away the hole splendidly.

Unfortunately, as for me, I don't possess the right confidence to become a person of such rank.

If there's time, I'd rather hold a discussion regarding the new company's policy and trade, as it seems to be more meaningful.

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Another month has passed since we commenced our business in Est.

Finally, the Sawatari Trading Company's new building was completed.

At first, I planned to build it using wooden materials, but, the price for lumber in the Silesia Kingdom was expensive. Rather than that, I decided to spend slightly more money and construct a firm building using bricks.

It was a two story, small, company building, which comprised of a shop and an inner warehouse on the 1st floor, and a living space on the 2nd floor.

Behind the building, there was the workplace for soap production that still took place inside the tent.

I thought about extending the building once I manage to earn more money, but for now, it's probably enough.

In addition to the soap, the niter production was going smoothly as well, so I was able to force a sale of my bombs to the state mine located in the Ye mountain range, which yielded quite a profit.

There are lots of villages with iron ore mines based in the Ye mountain range that belonged to Est. Not to mention, there are even coal, copper, tin, and silver mines there, so when I'm supplying customers with bombs, I can learn lots of useful things about mineral-made goods that can help me in trade.

In an RPG, copper and tin are metals that are more fragile than iron, but they are both considered to be more valuable, and hence, more expensive than the popular iron. As tableware, they are inferior to silver, however, there are lots of bronze and tin-made things, including tableware, that aren't just practical but also valuable in terms of art.

As expected, even a silver mine used to cast coins is under severe restrictions, isn't it?

The one which I had visited was heavily guarded everywhere by both guards and soldiers.

Shouldn't it be obvious? After all, this place is a mint.

What was also different about this world was a mine containing magic jewels.

Magic jewels are items with crystalized mana (Also known as source of magic used by magic beings to cast spiritual, holy, the four elemental spells, and various ones like these.) that dates back long ago when Ye mountains were still sacred. They're usually transparent red or blue, depending on its nature of power.

I wasn't very knowledgeable on jewels, but, they looked like sapphires and rubies.

Even though jewels are just items for practical use, they're actually highly valuable if you regard them as jewels. Together with the silver mine, this one too was heavily guarded against illegal digging.

"With this magic jewel, will I also become able to use spells?"

"I would doubt that, as Takeru-dono has no foundation in magic. However, it's still possible for you to use them if you choose the right jewel and magic tool."

Inside the village nearby the magic jewel mine, there was a magic jewel shop.

This convenient 'wand of the flame orbs', which I could use instead of a lighter, had its mana about to run out, so I had to recharge it using one of the magic jewels from the shop.

With this 'wand of flaming orb' being fully charged, I can shoot approximately 5 fireballs at the maximum power output, and as many as 10 times, with a normal power output.

The cheapest price for an average magic jewel is 5 silver coins.

"That is to say, I've spent 1 silver coin each time I cast a spell?"

"I haven't thought about that before, but, now that I think about it, it's quite

an expense, isn't it?"

Lyle-sensei, who is a middle-class mage, showed me previously how he could cast a spell really fast. Since he can replenish all his mana within a single night, it would be equivalent to a few gold coins.

I could understand why mages are treated as special beings, even if they can only use simple elementary spells.

I decided I would buy a bunch of 'ring of water currents' later, which allows you to cast basic water spells.

The ring is a magic tool that creates water currents by absorbing molecules of water from the atmosphere, but, even if I were to buy wholesale and beat down the price, I could only purchase it for as little as 5 silver coins per item.

"Buying that many items, what do you intend to use them for?"

"I thought about using them for our company's toilet."

"Is that so....?"

Perhaps, Lyle-sensei wasn't aware about that, but for me, the lack of a washlet(2) was a real pain in ass.

Together with the soap that can be used for hand washing, the washlet will most likely greatly improve this world's sanitation levels.

Right now, I have an abundance of money, thanks to my bombs selling favorably.

"Sensei too, is there anything you'd like to have?"

"Then, can I have some of these magic jewels in case of an emergency?"

What Sensei asked for were fine quality items, high grade magic jewels which housed an amount of mana more remarkable than those standard ones.

Even a novice, like me, could notice the difference from their aura.

Far from it being 3 times the normal amount, the jewels stored 5, perhaps 6 times as much mana as a standard jewel. In addition to them being used when running short of energy, they also acted as charms, which apparently many mages would carry with.

The price for a single item was quite high in comparison with normal jewels, ranging from 3 to 5 gold coins.

However, it wasn't that much if it was meant to be used during an emergency case.

Let's take this opportunity and purchase several sets of this and standard jewels.

"Umm, I know I'm the one who asked for this, but, at this rate, won't you use up all the money from our sale which we earned this time?"

"I don't mind. After all, the production area is located here, so there's no way anyone could sell our goods at a cheaper price."

I too, have made dealings upon checking market price from other places.

Our goods are ones that can be sold in Est with no loss, even if somebody was to buy plenty of them.

Well, I don't plan to sell out my items, so as to avoid money shortage, but...

"Speaking of which, I was wondering if there's no tool that casts recovery magic."

"It's not like there isn't, but holy magic is under the complete jurisdiction of the church. You may be able to find some low class recovery magic tools,

however, they won't be different from drinking a potion."

I see, so this is the reason why I couldn't spot any recovery spell casting tools in the shops.

Not even Lyle-sensei, who's close to being omnipotent in the magic field, can use recovery magic.

Just having picked herbs wasn't reassuring, so I decided to make additional purchases and save up recovery potions when the market prices fall down.

'Just do whatever you can.' – There's never enough money, so I can only encourage myself to do more business.

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Once we finished peddling around the territory near the Ye mountain range, we returned back to the city of Est.

"Finally, we have returned, right?"

".....I think, the city feels somewhat different."

As we were about to enter in, the city became noisy, just like Lyle-sensei said.

The guards, who were at the entrance, had stern expressions and gave out an impression of as if being in a hurry.

"We should head to the company post haste."

"You bet."

The Sawatari Trading Company is located near the city's plaza, that is to say,

in the heart of this city's trade district. I would usually come here astonished at the sight of this bustling plaza.

However, despite this marketplace normally bustling with activity, today, it wasn't crawling with many people.

And neither, did it feel like there was any festival going on.

What we saw in front of us was a plaza full of set up tents and injured crowds of people huddling together.

Notes and References:

1.we're not 100% sure about this sentence. Our translation is what the raw says, but the sentence doesn't make sense in context.

2.also know as a bidet toilet

Chapter 11 – The Recapture of Ona Village

The plaza located in the city of Est was jammed with people who had escaped with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

That's right, there's no way a city wouldn't become noisy because of that.

Was there some kind of disaster?

As soon as we entered the Sawatari Trading Company, we were welcomed by Louise, who had a sour face, and her disciples, Suzanne & Claudia.

It was rare for our team of female warriors to not be out on a monster hunt.

“What happened?”

“The village of Ona has been attacked by a large group of monsters. We were able to fight them back together with this city's garrison and other adventurers, but eventually, our side was outnumbered and forced to retreat.”

The village of Ona is located in the northern direction, not too far away from Est.

Apparently, it's a settlement built on a spacious, tranquil meadow that houses as many as 200 villagers.

Does this mean that the remaining monsters from the large wave that

spawned near the royal capital has, in the end, managed to surge into Est's vicinity?

"Did you sustain any injuries?"

"Yeah, but we're fine. That's because we carried plenty recovery potions with us. Still, even though we were there, we barely managed to evacuate all the villagers....."

Even though they recovered themselves with potions, I could tell how fierce their battle must have been, judging from their shredded leather armors.

Still, to think that someone as strong as Louise was forced to give up.

Even our company has been doing business with Ona, as their village, which thrives on stock-farming, has been supplying us with the soil necessary for niter production.

There were familiar faces among the villagers who had been huddling together in front of our shop, so I decided to go and check if there were any injured people.

"Louise, is it fine for me to use recovery potions on the injured people?"

"Why are you asking me that every single time? They're your items, so you can use them as you want."

I knew Louise would answer that way.

Her response was cold, but there's no doubt Louise would've done the same and used her own potions on the injured people.

The villagers of Ona were people under protection of the Earl, Est, so even the healers from the city's church arrived to help, however, they were short-handed, as there were too many injured people.

'The city is probably running short on recovery potions, so maybe I could take this opportunity and resell them at a high price?' – Is what I thought.

However, I subdued this wicked thought of mine and proceeded with the distribution of my potions.

"Thank you very much! Thank you very much!"

"Ah, no no, we're on the same boat in these troublesome times, so...."

(This young villager who threw these words of gratitude at me, he must be thinking I'm a fine person. Kukuku.....)

You must lose a fly to catch a trout, or so they say.

These villagers here live nearby, so if I demand gratitude from them, I can easily yield big profits afterwards.

(Despite saying so.....)

Even though I went through the trouble of establishing this company in Est...

Nevertheless, I don't intend to look on passively as the monsters take over their village.

'Now that it has come to this, what we need is the strength of firearms, rather than swords.' – Is what I thought.

I alone, made this resolution silently.

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"What? You plan to retake the village of Ona from the monsters?"

"Yes. If possible, I'll show you, later, how to push the monsters back and get rid of them entirely."

I decided to visit the Earl, Est's, castle and declare this in an impressive way.

As expected, was I boasting too much? The Earl looked at me doubtfully.

"Certainly, you'll become a big help to me if you can do it, but...."

"We'll be using the new weapons, so there's a chance for success."

I received a message from Dacole about the prototypes of the gun and cannon being made, and therefore, had Lyle-sensei go pick them up at the moment.

In the meantime, Louise and the rest are scouting for the location and scope of the monsters.

Originally, the soldiers in the standing army of Est were scarce.

And then, there was that epicenter placed near the royal capital that spawned large numbers of monsters.

Both the royal capital's chivalric order and its army corps were occupied with defending the main road and territories that fell under its direct jurisdiction. Because of that, they couldn't afford to send reinforcements to the territory of Est, which was located at their back.

"Oh, that's right, there are supposed to be those strange, new weapons which Takeru-dono has. Fine, I shall issue a special request for extermination. I'll give you these 10 platinum coins if you manage to retrieve the village of Ona. How about that?"

"Ohh, so these are platinum coins. I've heard about them, but, this is my first time seeing them."

Platinum coins were special coinage made from rare platinum. A single piece was worth 10 gold coins.

In other words, 10 platinum coins would be the equivalent of 100 gold coins.

The coins are reserved to only be used by nobilities during their trade with distinguished traders, so they can barely be found in money circulation. If I were to compare, they're similar to those 100,000 yen worth gold coins.

Looking at these glittering coins placed on top of the red table, I reached out my hands without thinking ahead. As I did so, they were pulled in.

"I won't give you them yet. Only after you get rid of the monsters and manage to get the village back."

"Yes, I understand."

'If the Earl has this much money, shouldn't he invest more in soldiers for his army, or hire mercenaries?' – I wondered about this, but....

To begin with, the territory of Est was a peaceful area far away and free from border disputes. Perhaps, this was the reason why he couldn't make any recruitment during an emergency.

It would be just the right time if there was anyone who could lend their military power.

"Furthermore, if you can eliminate the nearby monsters once and for all, and restore peace to this place, I'll give you additional 300.... no, 500 gold coins!"

"Well then, please do as you say."

I drank dry my cup of coffee, after which I left the castle behind.

10 platinum coins for releasing Ona village, and an additional 500 gold coins for exterminating the monsters?

Even if the Earl Donovan was grand, it was quite the lavish promise, however, he probably thinks there's no way for me to accomplish such a feat.

I, too, don't know how far I can get, but, I guess it can't be helped if there's someone seeing me that way.

Anyway, I just wanted to seize the opportunity to go on an attack and make the most of my winning streak.

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Lyle-sensei returned back with a set of big guns and cannons, so we held a strategic meeting inside the company building.

According to Louise and the rest's reconnaissance, the group of monsters that has been staying in the village consists of 100 armored orcs, as the main force, and nearly 100 ogres and kobolds, which makes a total battalion of 200 units, or so it seems.

An orc is a monster well-known in fantasy worlds, with a pig face and human features. It's equipped with more proper weapons (not just weapons, but also protectors) than ogres and kobolds. Besides that, it's highly intelligent, so one should consider it slightly on par with armed forces.

While we are at it, despite orcs having those ugly pig faces, they are surprisingly sociable and tend to form large groups with other humanoid monsters, however, they're not on good terms with werewolves. Apparently, they would kill each other upon clashing.

Certainly, I'd like to have them kill each other, but, there were no groups of werewolves nearby.

Since orcs prefer livestock raised by humans, one could probably say they attacked Ona village due to its thriving stock-farming.

Against them, our war potential comprised of me; the magic user, Lyle-sensei; Louise; and the 13 slave girls.

In addition to that, it was decided that we would be joined by a group of 20 young villagers capable of combat.

With this, a total of 36 people would be fighting against an enemy of 200 monsters, which was a harsh number.

Obviously, that would be true under normal circumstances.

However, our side possessed modern weapons.

The guns, which we received from the Losgow's(1) blacksmith, were manufactured arquebuses with simple constructions.

Since the ammunition is made from paper cartridges, it's much easier to be inserted than in those real, old fashioned arquebuses.

Once we tested the weapons at the outskirts of the city, the villagers became unable to stand due to surprise.

Well, it can't be helped. After all, they're not used to it yet.

If our allies are this surprised, then it should be just the right weapon to scare the enemy.

Apart from me, who was used to this gun, Sharon seemed to be the one who had accustomed to the weapon the fastest.

"The recoil isn't that strong, so in order to avoid the gunpoint trembling, all you need to do when pulling the trigger is-"

"Like this?"

bang – As a noisy sound was produced, the gun's lead ball struck its target.

That's a skillful shot indeed.

The other girls, too, became able to shoot at their targets accurately once they got used to it.

As one would expect, young people tend to get accustomed to new skills

much quicker.

“I know it’s effective, but, perhaps a bow would suit me better.”

“Well, I think it’s better for Louise to fight using other weapons.”

Louise made a bitter face as she tested out the gun.

Naturally, she too could handle the gun quite decently.

Still, judging from the fact that Louise was already experienced with throwing knives and shortbows, it didn’t look like she would be able to master the gun that fast.

One could say that one of the gun’s advantages against the bow is that a novice can handle it, more or less, as long as it shoots.

We decided we would try out the big cannon by moving it on the covered wagon up to the hill, where Ona village could be fully seen, and use it for a surprise attack.

“Everyone, once I light the cannon, cover your ears.”

The cannon wasn’t that much different from the arquebus in terms of both being big, but, because the gunpowder we used was the black one, which has a powerful explosion, its sound would become way too severe.

Dokkaaaaan – A terrific roar generated and the large cannonball quickly launched toward the other side.

As soon as the cannonball reached its target it sunk into a fixed stone pedestal, making the ground tremble.

It looks like the cannon will have quite an impact if it hits precisely. Despite the cannonball not hitting its target accurately at all, the group of monsters that were stationed inside the village fell in utter chaos.

Should we try and give one more shot?

“Lower the angle of the cannon and move it slightly to the left.”

As Laura was cleaning its gunpoint with a mop, Sharon and the rest desperately moved the big cannon while wearing leather gloves, just like I had instructed them.

“Excellent, that’s enough. Load the cannonballs, we’re going to make 2 more shots.”

“Doneee!”

Once I made sure Laura had loaded the gunpowder with a stick and stepped aside, we launched two more shots.

“Ohhh, straight to the target.”

“We did ittttt!”

The cannonball bursted right in the middle of where the orcs were exiting from a building in a bustling manner.

It looks like the chaos has settled down quite a bit, which is probably due to the orcs forgetting to escape and falling into a stupor.

And for some reason, they also haven’t noticed this side attacking them.

Perhaps, to them it looked as though their allies had suddenly disappeared following the sound of an explosion, as they had no concept of cannons.

“Fine, let’s continue to shoot them steadily with this angle.”

“Aye aye, Sirrr.” [TN: Said in English]

Laura, who had become accustomed to the cannon, loaded the balls in it steadily and fearlessly. Because of that, the cannon kept firing rapidly towards the village, making the stone pedestal split open, and even the cannon’s barrel began to turn red from the excessive firing.

As a result..... the group of orcs became frightened at the deadly cannonballs that came flying from an unnoticeable direction. They scattered away and fled from the village.

“I guess this makes our gun practice meaningless, right?”

I was told like that by Lyle-sensei, who was a bit dumbfounded.

Perhaps, I've gone a bit overboard.

Translator's notes:

(1): I decided to change from Rosugo to Losgow.

Chapter 12 – Further Expedition

After we managed to chase away the orcs using the big cannon, we searched through dead carcasses of many of them for their weapons, and received ten platinum coins for the completion of the Earl's special request.

The recapture of Ona village turned out to be highly profitable.

We had obtained so many internal organs that we couldn't eat them all, therefore, Louise was pleased with herself at that fact. (Obviously, she tried to offer them to the villagers by distributing organ-based soup once we had returned, but, they didn't receive much recognition.)

Because we were the ones to gain the most from this battle, we felt sorry for the villagers, so we decided to help restore their village while picking up the cannonballs that were responsible for tattering it.

We repaired the fence enclosing this village's pasture and helped gather the livestock, which had previously scattered and ran away due to the monsters.

Borrowing the hands of the young villagers, who became adept with the guns, we finished off the remaining orcs that were hiding nearby after they had escaped.

With this, it should be fine to say we brought peace back to this village for the time being.

Still, the root of this monster wave has yet to be solved.

“If we go further north from here, there will be a fort belonging to a group of bandits. They are referred to as the Iwanushi group, but apparently, they’ve already been destroyed by monsters, who proceeded to turn that base into their own, and they keep charging at the territory of Est from there.”

Based on Louise’s intel, things turned out that way.

‘Well then, it should be fine if we just crush that bandits’ fort using our large cannon.’ – As I said so, nobody seemed to object to my opinion, so we decided to set out on another expedition.

I thought our plan would succeed with just the large cannon, however, there were twenty volunteers who were willing to join us while carrying guns on their shoulders.

Just as what Louise had checked beforehand, we set a camp nearby a hill, from which we could launch an attack on the fort (Even though it belonged to those bandits, how on earth had they managed to construct such a splendid, stone-made, three-story building in this small mountain, away from the main road?)

“This fort belongs to the bandits anyway, so nobody besides them will probably mind even if we blow it up. Well then, aim the cannon toward the fort.”

“Just give me a moment. I’ll calculate and decide the right angle.”

Lyle-sensei, took out a bunch of paper.

Apparently, he was also in charge of calculating the right distance and firing angle back when we launched the attack on those orcs in the village.

“My calculations might vary depending on the weight of the cannonball and the amount of gunpowder, but, it should set a criterion. (?)”

It seems that Lyle-sensei, has realized he could predict the landing point of the ball by calculating the cannon’s angle. Just what kind of cheat is that?

Like Lyle-sensei had instructed us, we aimed the cannon and fired. Once we did so, the cannonball hit right in the middle of the fort with the first shot.

Getting carried away, we continued to rapidly fire at that angle, making the stone made fort start to crumble.

The orcs residing inside the fort run out in a bustling manner, so we inflicted a single blow at the entrance and buried them alive.

We have, created something fearsome.

“What a terrific strength. I guess, we can use this for sieging forts from now on....”

Was, Lyle-sensei thinking about something diabolical.

I wasn’t very keen on using this cannon against human fellows, but well....

“.....No, in the end, they should be used for self-defense.”

If you say it that way, humankind will certainly start a war against each other.

Saying this and that, I guess, it was fitting of him as the secretary of the Silesia Kingdom.

Ah, is that so? I think I used to have the same way of reasoning.

The extermination of the monsters went favorably, but, I later realized it went so well it became scary.

We finished off the remaining orcs and kobolds with our guns and received meat and skins while collecting the bullets and cannonballs.

Since it was formerly a fort belonging to the bandits, there was a rumor about valuable goods left inside of it, and even gold and equipment.

‘Let’s use this chance and prepare a meal.’ – Feeling joyful, Louise took out the large pot that somewhat settled down the situation.

The white stew made by Louise from internal organs had a bad reputation among the villagers of Ona, however, its porky taste perfectly matched my buds.

The villagers had pale faces upon seeing Louise processing an orc’s meat, however, as for me, I could only think of it as food preparation.

It could be that my common sense has gradually accustomed to Louise's while we've been hunting together, which made me become a little bit scared.

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"I wonder if we shouldn't be returning to Est...."

We discussed together whether we should continue further our expedition or not, but, Louise was against that idea as she had advised us before not to come too close to the miasmatic mana hole.

It was certain we felt self-confident thanks to us acquiring guns and cannons, so we were ready to even go as far as where only a hero class person could go. At this rate, there won't even be any need for a legendary dragon to make its appearance.

What's more, a reinforcement sent by the royal capital had arrived, so the Earl didn't make any further request to attack.

It was decided we would return back to Est.

While we are at it, we've received one more horse cart set, which doubled our horsepower at the same time.

In addition to the artillery battery, our covered wagon was also completely filled with meat and pelts. Despite that large amount, we were somehow able to transport the goods.

Things which we couldn't load on the cart, like gold and equipment, would apparently be taken care of by Louise, who would go and return one more time.

Upon our arrival in Est, we visited Earl Donovan's castle again and reported the result of our expedition to him, at which, he was greatly pleased.

He told us it was completely fine for us to keep the money and goods we had found in the bandits' fort.

Not to mention, the Earl placed a sack of 500 golden coins, with a thud, on the table.

The victory coffee, with which the Earl treated us, wouldn't compete with a high-grade sake, however, it was tasty.

As one would expect, even I would be in good mood upon receiving such a lavish treatment.

I could understand more or less the Earl's intention of wanting to put me in good mood.

After all, he too was an authority with great sharpness and capability.

Still, there is no doubt it was also his way of saying he wanted our guns and cannons....

"And then, there's something I'd like to discuss with you, but...."

Look, it's already here.

"I've been thinking about appointing you, Takeru-dono, as the knight of our household, Almark, but, would you accept the offer?"

"Eh?"

I lost a bit of my composure at these unexpected words.

Did he notice that on my face? The Earl put on a smile as if he trying to curry favor with me.

"Yes, rather than becoming a knight, I've been wondering if it wouldn't be better to make you a Baron judging from Takeru-dono's actions. But, as expected, my rights as an Earl don't extend that far."

"Haa, ah no, that's a little...."

"However, despite saying you'll become a knight, I'd like to bestow you privileges as my governor and ask you to govern Ona's site alongside protecting it. If you agree, you'll practically hold the same power as a Baron. How about that?"

"Haa...."

What should I do in this situation?

I, who didn't anticipate this course of action, became troubled and shifted my gaze towards Lyle-sensei.

I was glad to have him by my side.

===Why not accept his offer? I think Earl Donovan's offer is even more genuine than his desire to have the new weapons.===

Ahh, so he meant it that way? Does the Earl want to convey something, like 'You can do whatever you want with Ona, as long you can hold back those monsters coming south from the miasmatic mana hole.'?

With the Earl's territory being constantly attacked, even the devastated village of Ona would need time to recover, so there was probably no loss in handing it over to me.

One could say it was a decent deal.

"Earl Donovan, I'll take up your offer."

"Ohhhh, so you agree?!"

Like this, I was accoladed as the knight of the Almark household, the ceremony of which I had happened to see very often.

"Excellent, Takeru-dono, from now on your name shall be 'Takeru Ona Sawatari'."

“Ah no, that’s a little bit...”

Please, don’t put ‘Ona’ between my nameeeee.

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The village of Ona, which I had newly acquired, thrived in stock-farming and its business efficiency progressed even further.

Just like the last time, we used the previous site as the base for making niter.

I also gave jobs in my company to villagers who lost theirs due to their farms being devastated.

We could gather as much soil as we wanted for the niter production.

What’s more, we were allowed to build small huts in public places inside the village, to our heart’s content.

On the other hand, the company kept manufacturing and selling soaps in Est.

With the surplus of money I had received, I sent further requests to the mine in Losgow to build more cannons.

For now, we managed to suppress the monsters that are coming south, but, if there is any chance of greater demons or dragons appearing from the hole one

day, we better have many large cannons.

If it's about finding carts with pedestals for carrying cannons, we can obtain one in the stock farm of Ona village.

Naturally, my true intention was to use guns and cannons to fight against monsters, therefore, I didn't feel like promoting them on a large scale for now.

Earl Donovan appeared to be somewhat skillful in trade, but, he gave off the feeling of being unfamiliar with military affairs.

I couldn't comprehend why I, who was supposed to be a merchant, had to think of a plan to defend a territory, but, I guess it can't be helped, since I accepted the Earl's offer to become his knight.

"I guess we lack hands....."

"Should we make more use of the girls?"

Lyle-sensei whispered, like a devil would, upon hearing my murmur.

I considered both the options of utilizing the girls and hiring new people.

Still, why does it have to be only the girls, Sensei?

It wasn't just making niter or soap that the girls were entrusted with.

They were also being trained to wield weapons, just like Louise.

You won't find soldiers comprising of slave girls in just Africa.

"Sensei, despite them being slaves, it feels awkward to let children fight with guns and large cannons."

"Isn't it better than leaving them to their certain death in the mines? Even children can easily master weapons upon seeing them, as they can memorize how to use them much better than adults. Not to mention, slave girls are dirty cheap in comparison with adults, so they can be quickly gathered."

"Hmmm, I see. So we're doing a philanthropic work?"

Indeed, Sensei as well, is dark inside.

"Hahaa, that's some splendid work there. Since our side has gained control over the route from the royal capital to the mine, we can contact slave merchants and get more slaves at any time."

"Still, won't those at the mine's side become troubled if we buy up the slaves?"

Certainly, child slaves were supposed to be consumable goods for digging narrow holes inside a mine.

There were also regular customers from mines who ordered gunpowder for blasting purpose.

As for Losgow, we had received requests not just for gunpowder but also guns and cannons.

“Don’t fret. About that, I think they will use adult slave miners instead and make them work away to death.”

“....I guess you’re right. Then, let’s do as you say.”

If children don’t die from work exhaustion, then adults will take their places.

It was something I was quite mindful of, however, such things couldn’t be helped in this world.

I thought it would be nice if gunpowder could be proven effective and help reduce the number of deaths, but, was there little hope for that?

In this world’s society, being heartless was something based on personal affairs.

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“.....With that, we’ll be gradually receiving more fellows from now on, so...”

“Yes.”

I told Sharon, who had grown to be near me in height, about us hiring new

slave girls.

Today as well, she was in charge of managing the company while selling our goods. Sharon was fit to become a leader who would be looking after other girls.

That's why, I deemed it was best to inform her about any news. However..... her ears looked as though she was somewhat discontent.

I couldn't see her tail, as it was hidden, but, I normally would understand when she was in good mood from her standing ears.

Sharon is usually in good mood, however, her completely hidden ears now somehow gave off the feeling of her grieving over something.

"You don't have to worry about living here. We've got enough funds and the company will also expand alongside the number of people."

"Yes."

Are? Did I miss your target, Sharon?

"If there's something you aren't content with or troubled with in your life, I'd like you to tell me, but..."

"No, it's fine. I've already received enough pay."

“Is that so? In case you’d wish for me to set you free from slavery, you can always go back to living as a citizen using that money you’ve earned.”

“Everyone is now content with their lives. Rather, if they were told they would be thrown out, I think they would hate it and cry.”

Ah no, even though I said I’d set you free, I didn’t mean to throw you out.

I still want to utilize children who can memorize their jobs.

Fumu, so there’s some other kind of problem present.

I couldn’t understand it anymore, so I gave up and decided to ask her directly.

“Could it be, it’s something personal?”

“Uhhh, just one thing..... When new children join us, like last time, we’ll have to wash them, right?”

“That’s true....”

Their dirty appearance probably felt inconvenient to them, so nothing would start, until we made them neat and clean.

However, you as well, don’t you always bathe yourselves in hot water, behind the company’s shop?

It was okay for them to wash themselves at their own convenience, but, all of them were still children, so girls, like Laura, quite disliked hot springs.

“.....Ah, yes, rather than that...”

It should be fine for us to build a hot spring when expanding the company, right?

I feel bad for having Sensei cast magic each time we needed water, so let's dig a well and make a pump.

Speaking of which, in the past, I'd thought about constructing a pump the first time I arrived in this world. Since its mechanism is simple, should I discuss this with Sensei and try it out?

I too, want to occasionally submerge myself in a tub and enjoy my time, therefore, it was bothersome when I had to go to Losgow just to enter a hot spring.

“Uhhh, Master-sama?”

“Ah sorry, I've been thinking about something. Like if it wouldn't be better for us to construct a new hot spring.”

“That's not what I mean. I was wondering, why, am I the only one who can't have you wash my body.”

“Ah no, that's, you know....”

I wondered if she could do it by herself, since she was the only one, among the other girls, who had an adult body.

Rather than that, does this mean she wants to be treated the same as the other girls?

Ah, so it was about that? Is this what she wanted to say?

Sharon possesses the blood of a beastman, so her growth has been fast, however, her insides are still that of a child.

She comes from a family of merchants, so she could write using low class letters and memorize how to do single-entry bookkeeping. Her sagacity is also what persuaded me to talk with her, like an adult.

That's right, being the only one left behind, perhaps she felt worried about herself being discriminated against.

".....I wonder what will become of me."

"Sorry, that was my bad. I shall consider you as well, the next time I bathe the girls."

You don't need to make that face, as if being about to burst out in tears.

Finally, as I caressed her head, a pair of animal ears stuck out from her soft, orange-colored hair.

“Yes.....”

Well, just because her body grew up a bit, doesn't mean I couldn't pamper her a bi.....speaking of which, it feels quite inconvenient, but, is it fine for me to think of her as a grown-up child?

Considering her age, she probably still wanted to be spoiled despite her looking like an adult.

“By the way, since Lyle-sensei won't object, it should be fine to entrust him with bathing you, right?”

Once I said so, both Sensei and Sharon's moods worsened.

This was intended to be a joke, but, could it be it was something forbidden to Sensei.....?

Chapter 13 – The Extension of the Hot Spring

Lyle-sensei had been buying new slave girls, following the expansion of the company.

The number of members wasn't particularly fixed, but we received 13 slave girls.

Every one of them belonged to the same age-group, which is around 12 years old. Perhaps, it was the best age range one could look for when managing slaves.

I was joking back when I said we were doing a philanthropic work, however, this is certainly a profit-making enterprise.

And also, it was a fact that I want people that are at the age where I could use them as part of my labor force.

Later, we'd have problems with things, like teaching and accommodations, were we to increase the number of people, so this many is just right, but well....13 people?

It doesn't look like people in this country consider '13' to be an unlucky number.

Lyle-sensei, probably thinks that adding new slave girls a few at a time will make a good education system when showing them how to operate guns and do specific jobs.

Should I just calmly entrust that part to him?

We had expanded the company by doubling the size of its building, however, the most particular trait of that expansion was a large bathroom erected on the

1st floor.

Water was scooped from a water well using a hand pump, and the bathroom was heated from the outside with firewood.

Naturally, there was also a drainage mouth buildin, so the water remained clean.

Even though I told her she didn't have to, Laure was, currently, drawing water and burning firewood by herself.

Apart from wanting to put wood on the fire, even in her job, she would continuously burn niter. Just how much did she like burning?

It looks like dwarfs are a workaholic type of beings.

Still, even though we had heated the bathroom, there was still the problem of many girls not taking a liking to bathrooms.

'Could it be that dwarfs are bad at dealing with water?' – I thought so, but I didn't feel like wanting to ask Sensei.

That's because, I'd rather dip kids that hated water inside of it. I thought I'd do so later.

"Well then, things will become faster if we wash you."

"....."

All the slave girls, were obedient with dead fish eyes.

They neither cared nor objected, since they understood this was natural when coming here for the first time.

Sensei, Sharon, and I took charge of bathing the 13 newly arrived slave girls.

“Sharon, you also, are going to help us bathe them?”

“Wasn’t it Master-sama who told me to do so?”

Ah no, you don’t need to make such a displeased face.

She’s right, I recall asking her for help.

Still, didn’t she want to be treated the same way as other girls?

Well, isn’t it fine? Be it Laure or Sharon, the most important thing is that both of them are eager to help.

All the slave girls were kind of like Cinderella.

‘Is it because they haven’t bathed themselves even once since they were born?’ – This is what one would think upon seeing their grey hair and skin.

Should I really call it grey? The color looked as though it was made as a result of mixing different paints together.

Once they’re made neat and clean using the foam from the soap, they will regain the base color of their hair and skin.

Red, blond, black, green, and even blue colors were included. It felt very much like a fantasy world.

As for the skin, there were lots of girls with small bruises, which was to be expected.

Even the slave merchants weren’t particularly sadists, so the bruises weren’t done deliberately.

Are you supposed to get that many bruises when you become a slave? Or perhaps, they’re marks from getting roughly caught, like with animals?

After we cleaned these girls' injuries, Viola proceeded to treat them by applying an ointment she had prepared from boiling the herbs she had gathered.

It was sad to watch them being treated like that without showing any pain.

Now that I think about it, the fact they dislike bathing, just like Laure, proves they're still human beings, I guess.

As soon as we briefly finished cleaning them, there were other seniors, besides Sharon, who joined us in wiping the girls' bodies using towels.

With each of them being in charge of a single person, the senior girls were very helpful for generally feeling responsible and teaching others, but....

"Well, now that we are done wiping the girls, let's change them into clothes. Once we find clothes for them, I think it's fine to conclude this day with a meal and sleep."

Despite me saying it this simplistically, the slave girls, who had just arrived, wouldn't move on their own.

Even if I were to give them proper undergarments, aprons, and boots, they wouldn't understand if someone told them it's okay to wear those clothes.

They were most likely deprived of their sense of ownership.

I made the girls sit at the dining table and have a proper meal, after which, I told them to go sleep in their beds.

Retrieving one's humanity is, quite a bone breaking labor.

The moment we put the 13 girls to their bed, this time we proceeded to bathing the senior girls.

“Oi, where did Laure go?”

“She was there, a moment ago.”

I couldn't spot Laure anywhere, so I asked Colette, the former daughter of a baker, who had been working together with Laure for a while. Nevertheless, she was nowhere to be seen.

Could it be she ran away?

It was very like Laure to disappear before her bath, right after she had finished taking proper care of the newcomers.

Well, that's fine. I'll soak her in water anyway sooner or later.

“Well, if she accustomed herself slowly and starts to bathe herself.... Hey, you're pretty fast when it comes to undressing, aren't you? Oi!”

Sharon too, had undressed herself and was waiting.

Uwaa, I guess I raised her to act like this.

To think she would be able to recover back her growth after just 3 months of proper eating, however, she was probably still a school child in regards to her age.

That's right, a child isn't supposed to be either scared or embarrassed.

“Fine, I'll start with bathing Sharon. Everyone, you better learn how to bathe yourselves too, got it?”

It's not like I disliked bathing Sharon or anything.

Though, it would be very helpful if they could do it with their own hands.

Does Sharon have a strong metabolism? The large bruises, which had covered her body back when I saw her for the first time, are already gone. Instead, her skin is now pretty, which is a real relief.

She would probably suffice to work in a brothel, but, her insides would cause problems from an ethical point of view.

“Master-sama, I’m the only one who’s been ignored twice when taking a bath, so please make it up by cleaning me properly.”

“I got it, I got it.”

I understand, so please stop showing me that expression from before.

It was already bad for a portrayal.

I shall subdue my emotions as much as I can, and wash you properly from head to toe.

Her small, wagging tail was cute, which distracted me upon seeing it.

Also, there was slightly orange colored fur on her back and wrists.

Nearby her chest, there were extra lumps of soft meat, which I’d rather not comment on.

Her groin area was also hidden in orange fur. That saved me lots of trouble.

“Okay, it’s done, you’re now neat and clean.”

“Uhmhhh.”

Ah no, you’ve already become clean. Your body was completely covered in

foam, you know?

I think I've done my best.

"Yes, it's done. I'll take care of the rest."

"....."

If you gaze at me that displeased, I won't be able to face you.

Sharon is around the age of a school child, so she might be a bit peculiar due to her race. It's probably not something I should mind, but....

Rather, I'd be a failure as a man if I were to.

I too, am 17 years old already, so responding more than this is impossible for me.

Even though I've been enduring lots of things..... I'm already at my limit, and about to spew out blood.

Washing the other children behind Sharon's back, I guess, they understood quite well that I'm not a lolicon.

I couldn't help but feel at ease.

Lyle-sensei, as well as Louise, were helping me, so we quickly finished bathing the senior girls.

"Yes, now that you've had your body cleaned, try and submerge yourself in the bath. It feels good once you start to get used to it."

For the time being, I tried to make them submerge themselves.

I didn't tell them to do anything unreasonable, but, that's because I had experience of that, you see.

Since a bathroom is good for one's metabolism, their bodies will also recover themselves, so perhaps they will take a liking to it while still being children.

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As one would expect, dividing 26 people into 2 bath rounds made the hot water become sordid.

I decided to remove all the sordid hot water, and burn new firewood for Lyle-sensei and Louise to enjoy their baths.

I was last in the queue.

For a moment, I thought about inviting Lyle-sensei to have a bath together with me, but, before I could even ask, he told me he would enter alone.

It could be that he saw through my intention.

More importantly, what about Laure?

Once I find her, I'll have to soak her in water at all costs.

There was Colette in the dining room.

Her soaked, long brown hair was glamorous.

This girl too, has the capacity to become at least a shop girl in a bar, were we to make her look pretty.

Indeed, her future looked promising.

Was it because she was formerly the daughter of a baker? Colette would prepare meals and serve them to others, just like part of her job, and eat as last.

The fact she is eating now, could be because Laure has finished her meal.

“Has Laure already finished her meal?”

“Ah, Master-sama. She's still hasn't, it seems that she usually eats late. I

apologize.”

“Ah no, that’s fine. Do you know where she has gone off to?”

“I wonder if, she’s still burning firewood for the bathroom.”

I guess that’s possible.

I wasn’t there to scoop new water, but, it’s likely that Laure chose the moment when I was absent, gathered firewood, and took care of heating the water.

Indeed, she’s a workaholic.

“Then, let’s await Laure’s arrival and prepare a special dish for her.”

“Eh? A special dish?”

“Orc meat gives out a nice aroma when you add lots of salt and spices to it. Later, we’ll also treat her with a distilled alcohol for her hard work today, a first-class one.”

“Understood.”

Laure works twice as much as others, however, she eats as much as a single person.

There’s no exception among dwarfs, even young ones like alcohol.

Alcohol is known in their world ‘life water’, and apparently, they don’t feel alive without it.

It also looks like it’s not particularly forbidden to let children drink alcohol in this world, so they can enjoy it as much as they want.

Dwarfs like food that are intense in taste, so if you make it smell really nice, they will fall for it.

And with the delicious alcohol, Laure will surely become satisfied.

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“So as expected, you were here?”

“Ah, Master-sama.”

Just what’s the matter?

I had a hard time catching you, but as expected, you returned back to the dining hall at last?

“It looks like we’ve both finished our meals at just the right time. Since Lyle-sensei and Louise have finished their baths, we’re the last to enter.”

“Ah, but I still don’t have enough fleas to be bathed.”

Yes yes, you can later drink as much as you want, so let’s go to the bathroommmmm.

However, just a single bottle of whisky won’t suffice to make you drunk, right?

Or could it be it’s because you’re a bit drunk that I was able to catch you, despite you running away from me.

Laure is the biggest earner among the senior girls, so it’s fine for her to ask on her whim for as much high-grade salt, spices, or meat she wants to have.

Still, it’s a ‘no’ unless you take a bath.

That’s because, even yesterday, she’s been working away at building the niter storage shed and gathering niter.

It's not a decent task, but, her job is something that involves being smeared in animals' dungs, rather than in soil.

I understood the best how demanding her job was, so I wouldn't become satisfied unless I made her clean.

"Okay. then take off your clothes. I'm going to wash these as well."

"Ah, Master-sama."

I quickly took off her dirty apron dress, so she covered herself with her hands once she became naked.

"What?"

"Please be gentle."

"Seriously, who taught you such things?"

We were both last, so I took the opportunity and took off my clothes to enter the bathroom.

I didn't know what Laure's age was, but, she looked to be the youngest among all the other slave girls, so I didn't think of anything in particular upon seeing her naked body.

That's why, she might be the easiest person to hang out with.

"I won't be too hard on you, so I'm going to wash your whole body. Prepare!"

"Hyaaaaa."

I covered Laure with foam made from a new block of soap, and cleaned her with all my might from tip to toe.

Her red copper hair and her brown dwarf skin were also the proof of her being pretty when polished.

Actually, her pointy ears shaped her cute appearance too.

Apparently in this world, elves are considered to be white, whereas, dwarfs – black.

If she does her best, she could also aim to become that dark elf, which is recently popular in fantasy worlds

“I guess I’ll become Laure’s producer and polish her into a fine person.”

“Uwaaaaawaawa.”

Hahaha, what an interesting person she is.

As expected, I might possibly be an S.

Bathing someone like Sharon, is harsh however, I can’t help but enjoy people’s reaction of dislike when bathing them.

What’s more, Laure’s red copper hair also regained its glamor after washing it.

Isn’t your brown skin pretty as well? Not bad, not bad.

“Excellent, now you’ve become completely clean. It’s even fine to call you a dark elf.”

“Master-sama, I, don’t like elves.”

Ah, so was it like that? I guess elves and dwarfs are on bad terms with each other in this world.

Well, that’s fine. Then, I shall name you ‘bishoujo dwarf’.

“Master-sama, you’re mean…….”

“Uaaaaa.”

This bathroom was quite high, but I wanted a pretty mirror at all costs, so I requested one in this bathroom. It was something only noble families could afford.

(In this world, a mirror is generally one type of a silver glass. I spent 2 platinum coins to buy all of them, so as to cover the majority of this bathroom. Citizens would usually use copper and tin based mirrors.)

Before I could tell, there was orange hair reflecting in the mirror, which made me surprised.

“Uaaaaa!”

Following my sound of astonishment, Laure too, did the same.

I think she was probably just surprised at my voice, which made her react in the same way.

Laure’s miserable voice echoed throughout the bathroom.

I guess, my voice was also the same.

As I turned around, there was fully naked Sharon standing there.....

“Even though you only washed me half-heartedly, you’re doing nothing but the opposite to Laure, aren’t you?”

“Hey Laure, you should be already soaking in the water.”

“Uwaaaa!”

My mind switched its focus to something else, in order as to escape the situation, so I lifted up Laure and put her into the bath.

“How’s that? Baths feels nice, right?”

“So hot~~~~”

“Even though you’re were the one to heat it up, now you’re feeling hot yourself? Hahahaa.”

“Master-sama, are you listening to me?!”

Uwaa, Sharon quickly turned mad and didn’t seem she would let me off.

Today was a tiresome day, so I too should enter the bath.

Haaa, as expected, bathrooms are the best.

At last.

“Laure, if you count to 100, you can then leave the tub.”

“2, 3, 5, 7, 11.....”

Are, why does she know the prime numbers?

Probably, someone had taught her that.

Sharon too chased after us to the inside of the bathroom.

Indeed, she’s truly persistent today.

“Master-sama.....”

“I got it, I got it.”

I've got it, so please stop pressing your chest against my back.

Honestly, that sensation will give birth to something dangerous.

Also, I'm tired, so I won't have any energy left for self-restraint.

"89, 97, 100. Master-sama...."

"I got it, you can already leave, honestly."

"Ah, wait Laure. I've prepared new clothes for you."

Sharon, ran after Laure, who had left the bathroom, and went to the changing room.

I see, so she brought a change of clothes for Laure?

(Phew. Somehow, it feels like we're always in a rush....)

To think that the hardest working person was Sharon, who would clean up afterwards.

Sharon is an indispensable member. I'm truly glad I could find someone like her.

Submerging myself in the warm water, I expressed my gratitude towards my lot.

"Master-sama....."

"Uwaaaaa!"

Oi, you don't have to wash my back, it's over.

Good grief, I should've gone out when those two were outside.

“We still haven’t finished our talk.”

“Uaaa....”

Again, she entered inside the bath.

It would be okay if it was different place, but a bathroom is bad.

“Why, is Laure the only one to get special treatment, and I just a slapdash?”

“I got it. Then, from now on, I’ll do my best when bathing you, so as to make up for the time I’ve been ignoring you.”

“Really?!”

I got it, so don’t rub your body against mine!

I could tell her ears were standing up and her tail, wagging, while she was inside the tub.

Good grief, I wonder if that place is the only one here I can look at.

“Yes, but under one condition. When I leave the tub, just sit there and don’t open your eyes till I say so.”

“Understood. I’ll do just as Master says!”

Just as she was told, Sharon sat near the washstand and closed her eyes.

Excellent, with this, I can avoid the worst-case scenario.

I scooped water into a bucket, got psyched and rinsed off Sharon one more time carefully from tip to toe.

“Han, kyan!”

“Don’t make weird sounds.”

“I’m sorry, but Master-sama’s hands are gentle.”

Honestly, I wonder if this girl realizes what she’s saying.

Damn, having a grown-up body, despite being a grown-up child, is a real torture.

That’s why I hate fantasy worlds.

“I have to focus when cleaning you thoroughly, so don’t make any weird sounds.”

“Yes, I’ll do my best, Master-sama.....Hau.”

“Your breathing-like sound is too dangerous, so stop it.”

“I’ll stop breathing, Master-sama....”

Ah, I’m already far past my limit and my heart is throbbing, so become serious and wash her, me!

It’s a physiological phenomenon, so it can’t be helped.

“I guess, it can no longer be helped, this.....”

“Ah, Master-sama, if you touch there.....”

“By there, what do you mean by there?!”

In the end, I covered Sharon completely in foam from tip to toe and rinsed her.

I was even requested to wipe her with a bath towel in the changing room.

The only thing that saved me was the fact that she kept her eyes closed, just

like I ordered her to, till the end.

Thanks to that, I was able to put my clothes on, but...

“Thank you, Master-sama. I’ll ask you for a favor again another time, is that okay?”

“Yeah, I wonder when it will be.....”

Good grief, truly, your master no longer knows what’s going on.

Because of that, I spent this night worrying endlessly while being unable to sleep.

I cursed this bad lot, which was responsible for my misery.

Chapter 14 – Various Battles

Since then, hordes of humanoid monsters continued to pour in from the miasmatic mana hole.

The village of Ona located in the north eastern part of the territory of Est has completely turned into the frontline between the monsters and humans.

Feeling the need to arm ourselves, we enhanced the fence surrounding the village, and erected small, stone-made towers equipped with large cannons.

We had around 20 young villagers, who had also become able to operate the iron cannons, for self-defense, so you could say we had enough defense capability, even without having to borrow people from Est's garrison or its adventurers' guild.

Louise, who seemed to be previously perturbed by the modern weapons, added another 2 people to her group of warriors, mounted her horse, and set off to conduct some reconnaissance. That was rare coming from Louise.

For some reason, Louise didn't take a liking to the small arms, and instead used a small bow. Nevertheless, despite saying so, not only did she teach her subordinates, Suzanne & Claudia, horse riding, she also taught them how to operate guns, making them become a platoon of unrivalled dragoons (soldiers capable of using guns and horses.)

At first, I wondered to myself if it was fine to teach only girls horse riding, but apparently, horse riding is more suited for people with small builds, so I was surprised at these two being able to quickly learn how to ride horses.

Well, the one who could truly fight on a horse was Louise, but, there should be no problem for the others if it was a simple scouting that involved long ranged attacks.

As one would expect, children are much more flexible.

While we are at it, I, who was appointed as a real knight, tried to practice some horse riding, but then quickly gave up.

It was much more fun to move on a horse cart, so I considered that as a better option.

Today as well, Lyle-sensei and I went to Ona village on our covered wagon, in order to collect soap and gunpowder from there.

Ona received lots of damage to their stock-farming from the monsters, but through our guidance, the village helped us with the production of new goods and thrived in business even more than before.

It was only thanks to us betting on the village that we were able to utilize it to its full potential, but, it felt nice to see one's own village thrive.

"Lord-sama, it's the enemy's attack!"

"Ah no, I'm not a lord..... eh, didn't Louise and the rest head that way?"

A young man dashed to me in a hurry while carrying his gun.

In the end, I was just a governor and not a lord, but even if I had explained that, the villager wouldn't have understood.

Not to mention, it felt uneasy to be called 'lord' by someone who was older than me.

Still, for the enemy to appear near the outskirts of the village, despite Louise and the rest setting off for their scouting, could it be they were aiming for this place?

I looked in the direction which the villager pointed out and saw a cloud of dust rising from the other side of the meadows, together with a battalion approaching.

It was still small, so I couldn't tell, but, were they orcs again? There was quite a number of them.

"It's probably a diversion."

Even though the village was about to receive the attack, Lyle-sensei said so with a smiling face.

I've been hanging out with him for quite a long time, so I can understand him, but, this person is interesting.

Sensei is unexpectedly fond of wars, despite him being an official.....

“Are orcs really that smart?”

“There are rare instances where a senior orc will become an orc lord. I guess, we’ll be dealing with a slightly tougher opponent.”

Lyle-sensei faced toward the battalion of orcs and casted his magic that would hold them. As he did so, some villagers from the self-defense team climbed the small towers with batteries and took their posts.

Sensei chuckled to himself while holding his handbook which contained his calculations he would do each time we aimed the cannons.

Despite the upcoming battle, his expression was too imprudent, which made me pull back.

Well, all I can do is follow Sensei’s tactic.

“Anyway, we’ll gather and fight!”

“Ohhhh!”

Carrying their arquebuses, the self-defense team gathered around me.

I immediately handed out cartridges that were loaded on the covered wagon.

The accuracy of the arquebus wasn’t high.

Therefore, unless we gather and fire into the enemy, the weapon won't become effective.

I think it's that thing called a 'barrage'. I wish there was some guy who could say things like 'our barrage is weak, we need to strengthen it'.

The self-defense team made from villagers wasn't as skilled as our girls, but, they were trained for a mass battle.

Lining up horizontally, the villagers lay in wait for the orcs that had passed through the village's enclosure.

They were quite numerous. If serious, the orcs will become a threat, however, our side didn't plan to lose.

Boko – A sound of crumbling was generated as the vanguard of the orcs fell into a hole.

If memory serves me right, was it 'Earth Trap'? It was quite a basic level earth spell, however, the range you could use it over and cause the ground to fall down is wide.

In a battle that involved a large number of units, even a simple fence or a pitfall would prove more effective than any attack spell.

The orcs charged vigorously, however, they stopped in front of the pitfall.

"Excellent, shoot!"

On that command, the guns fired at the same time.

At the sound of the explosion that was large than anything, and the severe rain of lead, the orcs started to lose composure and they..... didn't escape.

“GuuuuuuGagagaaaaaGoogogooooo!”

A terrific war cry, which was hard to describe, made the orcs behind step forward and hold back their puzzled comrades, who were about to break formation.

What tried to come out sluggishly from the hoard was a giant orc king that was twice as big in comparison with a normal orc.

It was wearing a helmet, with a large horn attached to it, and a waving red mantle. The orc king carried a stone-made hammer, which was longer than him.

I see, so this is an orc lord?

It's dignified body that stood out was the proof of its violent power.

With just a single war cry, the orc instinctively delivered fear to its enemy, and made other orcs shake.

If I were to describe the orc's ferocity, it would be that its eyes were filled with the color of wicked wisdom, alongside its madness.

A monster that could make everyone shiver with just its gaze.

I honestly wouldn't like to take it on as my opponent. No, actually, by no means.

'I guess it will be here soon.' – I thought so, covered my ears and put my head down.

That very moment, an explosion of flames together with a violent shock rose into the air. The fearsome orc lord and some of its allies disappeared amid the cloud of dust.

Dokan! – A firing sound that shook the air reverberated with a delay.

I was able to endure the impact, as I could tell from the ground trembling when it would come.

Beside me, this side too, became desperate to endure the shock wave and the tremble coming from the impact.

"Phew, you guys are truly scary, despite us being allies.....Everyone, keep firing the cannonballs rapidly."

"Yes!"

Far from the orc lord remaining where the cloud of dust arose, there was only a wide hole opened.

Both the skin and meat of the rare orc lord had probably been blown away somewhere.

I'm sure, Louise will be sad upon hearing that.

I don't know how strong the orc lord was exactly, but, if you come uninvited like that in front of a large cannon, it's bound for you to become like this.

In the end, the orc only possessed the intelligence of general Saruyama.

It was an explosion coming from a large cannon firing at a close distance.

It was so strong, even our side received some damage coming from the impact and blast of the cannonballs. Having lost their commander, and being at their wits end, the hoard of orcs scattered and ran away.

We used that momentum and killed as many as possible.

Our side had zero deaths. Even those who were injured would recover with potions.

The killed monsters would leave masses of dropped equipment, meat, and skins as a resource. The more battles we fought, the more this village would thrive.

"As expected of Lyle-sensei."

I directed these words of gratitude toward Sensei, who was getting off the small tower.

Thanks to his leadership, only one shot was needed to dishevel the orcs.

That alone, let us seize victory, as the shot aimed directly at the enemy's leader.

"What? The gist of this battle was to use both magic and large cannons, you know?"

"I see, so it was thanks to that?"

'Have I granted an outrageous weapon to an outrageous person?' – I pondered for a bit about that and became scared.

Not only was he able to skillfully operate the large cannon by himself, but also direct the villagers, and even teach them tactics.

Could it be it was actually Lyle-sensei who a threat to this world, rather than orcs?

Well, as an ally, he's a dependable person, but...

※ ※ ※

Our business was doing extremely well.

Once I established a trade chain that stretched around the territory of Est, and acquired numerous covered wagons, I decided to transfer my knowledge of manufacture, sales, and even peddling to the slave girls, so as to have them do all the tasks, instead of me.

In other words, I've gained a little bit of free time.

Our prosperity has also resulted, in major part, from Sharon's managements skills.

"Sharon, you should change your shift from time to time and have some fun."

"Haa, then, I'd like to go shopping."

Sharon made a face that was rare for her.

Well, I was just killing time on a whim, but I also wanted Sharon to relax from time to time.

I too, didn't want to just peddle, but also enjoy how my company thrives, from the top of the building.

Despite saying so, what our company handled were still soap, detergents, and gunpowder.

Besides that, Viola was also making ornaments for display from gathered herbs and wildflowers, but it also didn't seem like she was that busy.

I, on the other hand, would stop by places deep inside the city, and have some idle chat with the workers at the Earl's castle while promoting my soaps and detergents.

'That's right, back in my high school, I would do things, like running a refreshment booth.' – I thought about that nostalgically.

Back then, I wasn't optimistic about joining my class exhibition, but, I would enjoy treating other people with my cooking,

Despite me having been in this world for only half a year, my past memories felt as though they were distant.

"Somehow, it feels like I can enjoy my peace after a long time...."

.....The customers won't come.

Even though I went through the trouble of making firecrackers as a form of toys, nobody from this city's citizens would buy them, as they were fully regarded as a weapon for battle. What a pity.

As expected, I wonder if I should increase the number of goods in our repertoire.

"Ahh! So you were here!"

“Welcome....”

A young woman wearing a white mantle with blue lines suddenly pointed at me upon entering inside.

I guess, she's not someone I know.

“Nice to meet you, I come from the Asama Church, and I am a sister. My name is Steriana.”

“You aren't trying to deceive me, right....?”

On her white mantle, there was a blue colored symbol of the Asama Church.

Even I knew that much, so I didn't consider the possibility of her being a scoundrel trying to impersonate someone from a church.

To begin with, I wasn't a big fan of religionists.

I was quite familiar with the them, and was sick and tired of their natural-like attitude, so I unintentionally grouped this person together with the rest.

“That's wrong, I'm a full-fledged woman who walks the path of evangelism. Not a sibling's sister, but a real sister, Steriana!”

“Haa, nice to meet you.....”

The sister, whose hood was deeply covering her eyes, smiled at me and held out a silver ankh from her voluptuous chest.

I intended to say this as a joke, but, was I really supposed to accept it?

“Despite me asking around many shops, I had hard time meeting with the ‘rumored’ Sawatari-sama. You could even say that our encounter is fate, which we owe to the guidance of the Goddess of Genesis. Ahh, Asama-sama be praised.”

The item she held looked like a cross, but, the head of it was a bit spread apart. The woman held out the ankh and prayed.

I felt troubled having someone suddenly pray in front of my shop, but.....

While we are at it, the Asama Church is the biggest one in this world’s religious society.

This is also knowledge I had acquired from the holy document I’d borrowed from Lyle-sensei, but....

Apparently, the Goddess of Genesis, called Asama, is the one who created this world’s origin 8000 years ago from chaos. The followers of Asama revere the one and only goddess, forbid race discrimination, impartiality between sexes, and teaches about love for all living things.

Despite there being such a wonderful religion, there exists the slavery system,

the weak and poor are oppressed, and there are races, like nymphs, that are publicly persecuted. You could say it was ironic.

Well, I guess those religionists are the kind of people who are different on the outside and inside.

Perhaps, this was something common in a fantasy world.

Still, rather than spreading some fanatic teaching, I think the powerless and peaceful goddess-sama is way better than that.

While we are at it, the spreading of the holy letters, which I could use (somehow, it turned out like this.), was also thanks to the faith of Asama.

While it's obvious, an outsider like me has no religious piety, so I've never gone to a church here before, since I had no need for learning holy-based spells.

Wait a moment. What did sister mean by 'rumored'?

“‘Rumored’, what do you mean by that?”

“Yes, you're rumored. Right now, you're considered as a first rank hero, Sawatari-sama, who had arrived from nowhere to the city of Est, established his own company within the blink of an eye, saved the village of Ona from the savage monsters, and was bestowed knighthood and the title of governor from the Earl-sama.....”

“Ah, no, you're praising me way too much.”

“I’ve also heard you are a philanthropist who rescued slave children on the verge of death. You’ve gained quite a reputation here in this neighborhood.”

“Ah, no.....”

I’ll be ill at ease if you praise me this much.

“Even though you’re such a strong and kind person, you have no piety toward Asama!”

“Yes.....”

Just when I thought she was praising me, for some reason, our talk turned into a difficult one.

“Still, you’re the one and only Sawatari-sama. I, Steriana, won’t mind any trivial thing. I’ve come here today so as to help you deepen your belief from now on, and ask for a contribution from the Sawatari company to our church.”

“A contribution?”

Anyways, I, who was branded as someone with zero magic skills, and who probably couldn’t even use a recovery spell, didn’t plan to deepen my faith at all, but....

“This is a talk between us, but, we’ve received lots of donations from companies in other cities. It was thanks to everyone being deeply religious that

we were saved.”

“Ah, I see, so it was like that?”

I had finally given up. Even in this world, the church holds the same power as a king.

It was probably a form of demand to pay for holding a place, on top of running one’s business.

However, back when the city of Est was attacked, there were also priests from the church who helped by treating others.

Normally, when you’re requested to pay a contribution, I can think of it as nothing more than paying one’s tax.

“Then, how much would suffice as a contribution?”

“Your will is all that matters to us.”

For the time being, I tried to present her 1 golden coin.

Are, she won’t accept it?

“Your will is all that matters to us!”

“.....”

Then, one more coin.

“Your will is all that matters to usssss!”

“.....”

Is it not enough? Then, I’ll add 5 more.

The golden coins, which I placed on the table with ka-ching, were sucked inside the sister’s robe’s hem in a blink an eye.

“Thank you for your contribution! Deeper than any sea or mountain, Sawatari-sama’s deep act of devotion will surely be responded to by the benevolence of Asama!”

“Yes, thank you very much.”

I don’t mind if it’s a contribution around one’s necessary expenses, but, I didn’t want to quarrel with this person.

I want her to go back already.

“By all means, if you have any free time, please visit our site once. I, Steriana, shall welcome you whole-heartedly and with great attention to detail.”

“Is that so.....?”

“Yes, ummm..... please feel at ease and call me by my nickname, Ria. Everyone who’s a close friend of mine calls me that. And since, I too, will be calling Sawatari-sama by Takeru, I beg, you by all means.”

“Haa.... you mean it?”

Why did she suddenly start to address people without honorifics? This sister has a strange sense of distance.

The sister gradually approached me at the shop counter and bent her body forward.

Oi oi, don’t just place your chest on the counter!

Even if you give me that service, I won’t increase my contribution, you know?

I wonder if she’s feeling alright, having a chest that huge.

Could it be that this nun’s thick robe is actually intended to emphasize her awfully huge rack, and arouse one’s sexual desire?

Hmm. I have the feeling this sister is giving out an intimidating air for some reason.

Better not get too involved with her.....

If only I hadn't suffered from being unsociable when talking for the first time with a woman, I'd have immediately found a good reason and chased this nun away.

"Is there anything you're troubled with? It's my job to assist everyone, who are adherents and children of the goddess, with their problems."

My problems, right now, occur with time, but.....

"Uhm, Sister-sama, there's nothing in particular, so if you could,"

"Oh my, Takeru, you're indeed graceful, despite not calling me by first name. What a humble person you are!"

"....."

That's why, even though we've just met, why are you suddenly this friendly with me?

I don't want to become intimate with you, your sense of distance is weird.

I know I'm only partially aware of what's considered common sense in this world, but if you act strangely like that, I won't be able to retort you that easily.

Perhaps, it's due to this world being a fantasy, and also because of Asama's teaching being supposed to be this friendly.

Certainly, if someone like her with such sex appeal approaches me, it's much easier to collect donations.

For me, who was bad in first time interactions with women, it felt close to being tortured....

“Ah, that's right, I'll take off my hood. Usually, I hide my face, because other adherents say they would lose their minds if I didn't, but, I'll make an exception for Takeru.”

“Uhhh....”

The nun suddenly started to lift up her hood, which was worn low over her eyes.

‘What do you think?’ – The sister, Ria, looked at me with glittering eyes, as if wanting to say so.

Ah no, it's..... normal.

Should I say her face was normal? Certainly, she was a person with silky, transparent-like blond hair. Her blue eyes were pretty, her facial features were well adjusted, and her skin too, was considerably beautiful, just like a white porcelain. I guess, this is to be expected from a western fantasy world.

No matter how beautiful she was, I would still be troubled if I were asked to comment on that grandiose appearance of hers.

“Uhm, could it be that you’d rather have me take off my robe? If you’re a person that swings in that direction, I shall do it without fail.”

“Nonononono, please wait, Sister!”

Don’t undress, like it’s a common thing!

‘This thing too, is hindering me.’ – Ria was about to unzip the robe near her chest as if saying so.

Do you even consider a man’s feelings when you show him that cleavage between your breasts, even though he doesn’t want to see?!

She probably planned to laugh at me behind my back while saying something like ‘That guy was looking at my chest, gyahaha,”

I took the series of events into account, and finally understood this situation wasn’t the result of Ria’s religious doctrine, but due to her personal reasons.

Suddenly undressing like this, no matter how insane a religionist you were, this probably wouldn’t work, even in a fantasy world.

A religious cult also had its good points.

“Somehow, Takeru’s reaction is weak..... as expected, I can’t avoid undressing myself?”

What? Is she threatening me?

I guess, it can't be helped but to praise her look.

"Uhhh.... Ria, you're an incredibly beautiful person! I even accidentally mistook you for an elf!"

"Fuhii, noo, Takeru, you meanie, you're praising me too much! For me to be called an elf.... but, but, unfortunately I don't have pointy ears."

It seems I was right about praising her. Ria, whose face was radiant with smile, brushed up her blond hair. As she did so, I glanced repeatedly at her ears.

Indeed, her ears were also pretty.

However, she was a bit annoying.

Despite having such an appearance, I couldn't bring myself to praise her any longer.

In the first place, was this sister an elf or not?

Asking that to myself, I didn't feel that curious.

For the time being, I'd rather have this person stop stripping inside my shop.

"Also, there's one piece of advice I need to give to Takeru, but, sisters are

obliged to swear to keep their chastity, so it won't do if you fall for me."

Honestly, I don't. Where did you get that idea from in our talk?

Just what's the deal, with this person.....?

I guess, this is when.... doing business with customers becomes a big pain in ass.

I don't know how to deal with people like this.

Later, I should praise Sharon for doing this tough job.

"Sister-sama, today, I was able to observe your stunning face, so if you could leav--"

"Oh that's right. I'll say this, but, Takeru has done us an incredible favor. Maybe, I, could prepare you some holy water in return?"

No, please go back already.

I've no need for holy water, so I don't go to a church.

No, wait a second. On second thought, there might be a way to utilize it.

I wonder if I should at least get some samples.

“Uhhh, I think holy water is fine.”

“Ohhh, so Takeru too, is willing to have it? I usually wouldn’t answer to this request, even from the most devout of adherents. Empty potion bottles or anything similar will do, so can I have you go and scoop some water? Also, I’d like for you to do it quickly.”

‘This sister is quite a slave driver, isn’t she?’ – Being curious about the new item, I went and collected water in as many as 10 empty bottles, and returned.

“Is this much fine?”

“10 bottles....? Well, that’s okay. I’ll make this first time a service special.”

Somehow, it feels like the people from the Asama Church are easy-going.

“I, Steriana, the loyal adherent of the Goddess of Creation, Asama, pray to thou. Bring us a fragment of thy holy light of order, and grant us your grace of benevolence!”

As soon as the sister placed her ankh on top of a bottle and finished praying, the water inside of it radiated in silver.

“Ohhh.”

“Well, it’s not like I need to chant this prayer when creating the water, so we can omit this part when doing the same with the rest.”

Honestly, say that earlier.

To think you'd need to make this long speech each time you had to give this burbling, silver light to water.

Somehow, it looks like the ankh is the item through which you make the holy water.

"Uhhh, I managed to turn each water in the 10 bottles into the holy ones."

"That was amazing, indeed."

I cannot use spells, so obviously, I considered this as amazing.

Well, if we disregard her personality.... No, actually, this person's personality is incredible too.

"Ehe, alchemy based on holy power is my specialty. I won't mind if you praise me more. By the way, if you sprinkle this holy water on items, it will dispel their curses. If sprinkled beforehand, the items will act as a charm. You can even attack undead using this water."

Ria kindly explained while pointing at the bottle containing white water. I only wish she could've done that service in a more normal way from the beginning, but...

"Shall we try it out? Do you have any item at hand that you usually use?"

“Uhm, how about this one?”

I placed my magic item, ‘wand of the flaming orb’, on the table.

Ria sprinkled one of the newly made bottles of holy water on it.

“With this, your item has become a ‘holy wand of the flaming orb’. The wand has the divine protection of Asama, and it will also consume less power when used. What’s more, it will be difficult to place any curse on it.”

“I see....”

Following that, she pointed at the silver radiating water inside a bottle once more and carried on with her explanation.

“This water also has health properties and is rich in nourishment. If you just drink it like this, it will recover you from any abnormal state. They say that combining recovery potions and miracle drugs are the most popular way of creating elixirs, you know?”

“Fumu, it’ll become a good lesson for me.”

Certainly, if my memory serves me right, there’s supposed to be that thing called an elixir, which is highly compatible, just like the recovery potion. So, you make it like this?

As expected, anything that’s recovery-based involves the use of holy spells.

“This time it was a real exception, so please don’t tell the other sisters I made this holy water for you, okay? Originally, I planned to have you come to our church, and make it there in exchange for your donation.”

“About that, thank you very much.”

I pondered about this for a while, but, this person looks to be more of a peddler, rather than a sister.

I felt, a bit of sympathy on that part.

Perhaps, it was natural for her to involve herself in peddling activities, since, as a nun, she was supposed to convey her goddess’s teachings.

I guess, you could tell it from that grand way she asked for a contribution a moment ago.

“Also, it’s better if you keep that fact, about me showing you my face, just between us. It would be quite troublesome if Takeru were to be resented by my fans.”

“You mean that?”

“However, worry not. Even if you’re resented or cursed, the holy water will protect you.”

“.....”

That was clever of her, but, I wonder who should be the one saying it.

“If something happens, we can always guide you to our church. Still, it’s just the matter of time, you see.”

“I still have a company to take care of, so I apologize.”

I’m grateful for your holy water, so please quit this talk and go back already.

“As expected, I wonder if shouldn’t have stopped at my hood and taken off the rest of my robes too.”

“Ah no, that’s already quite enough.”

“Takeru, since you’re a man, could it be, you were looking forward to that service?”

“Ah no, it’s really okay.....”

I beg you, please go back!

In the end, we managed to chase her away thanks to Sharon returning back to the shop, so the Sister, Ria, didn’t remain here to continue her business with us with that attitude.

I reflected on myself for a whole day upon realizing how great Sharon was, to

be able to deal with such demanding customers, despite her being just a salesperson.

Chapter 15 – The Responsibility of a Secretary

On a certain day, I was called by Lyle-sensei to have an earnest talk with him.

Despite this place being my company, it was my first time entering Sensei's private room, so my heart was throbbing a bit.

There were books lined up in a row on shelves, and his desk was crammed with piles of documents. It was a bit hard for me to find a place to sit, so I had the feeling the 2 of us would end up sitting on his bed.

Still.

What's the reason behind Sensei giving out a nice smell, characteristic of that in girls?

Despite his brown, short hair and his body covered in official clothes, as one would expect, he looked nothing different from a girl with a ripened, beautiful profile.

"What's it, Sensei? It's rare for you to call me for a talk."

Usually, it would be me to hold a conversation, however, this was truly rare.

Haa, could it be that it's finally come to 'that'?!

Was he finally going to reveal the secret behind his gender?!

"Yes, it's not something I can do on my own, so I need to discuss it with you."

"Yes!"

Could it be, that I raised Lyle-sensei's flag, before I could've even noticed?

Fine. Be it a cross-dressing male or a girl, I love both of them!

I'm ready to accept them, to the extent of being at the point of bursting!

"Won't you consider merchandising guns and cannons to the country? If that's fine with you, I will use my experience as a secretary and draw up a plan of sale and distribution."

"Eh, that's...."

What's that? So he isn't going to confess his gender?

"Being an arms dealer is profitable, you know?"

"Yes."

I also thought about trading weapons, since I wanted money...

However, I also thought it could end up as a bad idea.

"I do understand your concern well, Takeru-dono. You're afraid that the weapons would be used in battles between human fellows, right?"

"True, there's such a possibility as well."

As expected of Lyle-sensei.

It looks like he was able to see through all my thoughts.

"However, there's a 'but'. The monsters spawning from the miasmatic mana hole are causing great troubles to the kingdom. Only in the royal capital, the area nearby, and the main road are barely able to keep them away. On the

other hand, the villages and cities on the east side are sustaining devastating attacks from the monsters, rather than fighting between each other.”

“That’s....”

“Well, please let me finish speaking. If even people, who aren’t able to use magic, can use guns and cannons for self-defense, things like having hard times dealing with the monsters won’t happen.”

“I do understand your point, Sensei.”

“No you don’t, Takeru-dono. It’s thanks to the large influx of refugees to the royal capital, that there are this many slaves, and therefore, lots of children being randomly sent to the mines.”

I see. So the situation looked like this?

I didn’t give it that much thought.

“Takeru-dono, you’re also gentle toward slaves, right? You even rescued the villagers in Ona, who had lost their basic livelihood, gave them means of self-protection, and new jobs. That’s splendid coming from you. I too, feel greatly proud of myself, having helped.”

“Well, it wasn’t that much, but....”

In the end, I used the slaves and villagers for my own gains.

I wasn’t trying to do any good deeds, so it felt embarrassing to be praised.

“However, things like these are originally what a country is supposed to do. Even if I wasn’t the one to suggest them, the royal capital would still inquire of me upon hearing about the rumored recovery of Ona village. I think they would buy the new weapons and do nothing but utilize them.”

I see, Sensei had thought about that as well.

That's why he was so passionate about manufacturing the arms and researched how to use them.

I don't know if there's any difference, but, we have also tested lots of materials for ammunition when building a bronze-made cannon, instead of just the standard iron-made one.

'Why am I brooding so much over a single village?' – I suspiciously thought so.

"Still, even if this country purchases our arms, you said there's been never a case where they would exploit them, right?"

"True. That's why, I'd like for them to accept our proposal."

'I implore you.' – Sensei, to whom I was greatly indebted, bowed his head toward me. Even I had difficulty in responding to that.

Sensei continued to solicit me, who was hesitant.

"The number of slaves won't fall as long the root of that, displaced people, still exists. I can't guarantee that the weapons won't be used between fellow humans, but, won't it become a chance for Silesia kingdom to overcome this crisis....?"

"Ah yes, I understand. Please do as you deem right, Sensei."

"Thank you, Takeru-dono. You have my eternal gratitude."

Sensei's gorgeous and soft palm of his hand piled up on mine.

We were about to grant a country, where bows and swords were still common, guns and large cannons.

Perhaps, it was truly a bad decision.

Still, if it wasn't for Sensei's help, I'd have died long ago.

I too, grabbed Sensei's warm hand in return.

It was actually me who should be eternally indebted to him.

Even I, who possessed the knowledge of modern warfare history, couldn't tell, at all, what effect the weapons brought into this world of vast plains would have, despite people here being attacked by monsters spawning from that miasmatic mana hole.

It may be that the arms won't be utilized just for one's self-defense, as they may be proven highly efficient, so there's also a fear they will induce wars, which can't be undone.

It was a problem I couldn't solve, even if I pondered on it. However, it couldn't be helped that I worry about the future, could it?

As for me, I could only choose the path that the people around me continued to walk.

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Having my mind filled with nothing but serious matters, I headed towards the dining hall on a whim.

“Ah, Master-sama. Shall I make something for you?”

The one who welcomed me inside the hall was the brown haired and eyed Colette, the former daughter of a baker.

She holds deep interest toward food, so it somehow turned into her being in charge of cooking.

Besides that, Colette was also in charge of supplying us with foodstuff. While we're at it, she would usually hang around dairy farming families in villages near Est, and even help Laura, who was a poor talker, gather soil for niter making, in exchange for other services.

She wasn't as competitive as Laura, but this girl was quite a hard worker too.

"Ah no, I thought about doing it by myself today, so...."

"Then, I shall assist you."

Colette put on an apron on her, heated the stove, brought cooking utensils, and stood on standby, as if it was natural thing for her to do.

"Then, can you help me?"

"Since I'm deeply curious about Master-sama's cooking, please allow me to learn by all means."

Recently, I had had a lot of spare time, so I decided to revive modern cooking and handle it.

I normally like to eat, so perhaps, I could create some rare food with little effort, and add them to my products for sale.

"Whip this raw cream."

"Yes.... is it fine for me to whip it just like I've been doing before?"

Raw cream and butter are products created from the fat of a cow's milk.

There's refrigerator-like equipment in our dining hall (Lyle-sensei made it by creating and cooling water using his magic.), so we left the fat there for a whole day, atop the sediment.

"Yeah, I'm going to bake Crêpes"

I mixed together wheat flour, cow's milk, some eggs, and sugar, and then made raw Crêpes.

"So we bake the wheat flour just like a galette, right?"

The galette, which Colette spoke of, was a food made from thinly baked flour, common to this country's working class.

It had simple taste, so I quite liked it, but, it wasn't something I'd recommend to eat as sweets

.

Surely, if I remember right, Crêpes are supposed to be French-based cuisine, so perhaps you could find it somewhere in this country, were you to search deeper.

Still, I couldn't spot it anywhere in the city of Est, so I made one with raw cream inserted inside. This one is certainly a Japanese style one, hence, you will probably find it nowhere in this world.

I added the raw cream inside my quickly baked Crêpe, and tried to eat it in one go.

"It's delicious, but, I think it lacks a bit of sweetness."

Still, for me, it felt like a taste that I'd been missing for a long time.

Colette stared at me fixedly with a face telling me she wanted some, so I immediately baked one more.

I thought about increasing the Crêpe's sweetness, therefore, I put a peach that was rich in sugar together with the raw cream.

I presented the Crêpe wrapped up with the peach to Colette.

Once she put it in her mouth, her brown eyes sparkled with light.

She had an incredible smile.

"Itsh Dhelhicius...."

"Is that so?"

It felt really good to watch a child enjoying something delicious.

I myself was still an adolescent, but, perhaps this is how I would feel if I had a sister.

For some reason, watching her makes me want to smile as well.

"Master-sama, it's so delicious it feels as though my cheeks are about drop. This is the first time I've ever had something like this. I think this Crêpe will become a blockbuster if we add it to our line of sales products!"

"Indeed, that would be nice. I'll quickly bake some more Crêpes, so how about you give them to Laura and the rest?"

I also added nuts and cinnamon to other Crêpes, and even made a Mille

Crêpe, so as to create different tastes to enjoy. The Crêpes received extreme popularity from the others, as soon as I served some to them during our lunch.

It was still difficult for us to produce large amounts of raw cream, but, it isn't like you had to add cream to every Crêpe.

About its sweetness, you could always add fruits as a replacement, even though they were a bit high on that part. As for the raw cream, you could use egg white to make desserts, such as meringue.

Not to mention, there were also salty Crêpes, besides the sweet ones, which you could eat just like a sandwich with cheese and ham inserted.

Speaking of which, there are still sandwiches common in this country, so maybe I should make some hamburgers?

There were, as well, girls that wanted to open a food cart inside the company building. If I tell them how to make street food and have them sell it, perhaps, a new culture of eating while standing will be established.

The Crêpe as a sales product won't yield any huge profit, but, it could become a source of encouragement for people who make a livelihood from cooking.

I think this will leave a much greater impact than just promoting guns and cannons.

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Holding a letter with the delightful affixed seal of the Silesia Kingdom, Lyle-Sensei entered inside my room.

“I’m sorry for intruding!”

“Ah, what’s the matter?”

It was rare for Sensei, who was usually well-mannered, to enter without knocking at the door.

Sensei, whose skin was normally pure white with no tan, had a face even paler today.

I guess it’s not good news.

“It’s from the kingdom of Silesia. Our proposal for the deployment of weapons, has been..... rejected.”

“Ah, so I guess it was no good?”

I felt sorry for the Sensei being vexed, but, this information made me breath out sigh of relief.

That’s because I feared that the implementation of arms would bring a huge disbalance in hegemonic stability.

“However, the both of us have received an urgent calling from the royal capital. Can I have you come with me there? Right now!”

Why, were we summoned to the royal capital, despite our proposal of deploying arms being rejected?

I had a slightly bad premonition about this sudden call.

It would be nice if it was just a needless worry, but....

Chapter 16 – Silesia, the Wretched Royal Capital

Being invited from far away to the royal capital of Silesia, I imagined we would be received on a red carpet and have an audience with His Majesty, the King, however...

As soon as we reached the castle of Silesia, we were immediately led to a separate, small room, and held a discussion with an old man who claimed to be the Prime Minister, and one more who was the head of the Imperial Guard Cavalry.

I guess, it was to be expected. There's no way for someone like me, with a low social position, to talk directly to a king.

Or perhaps, could it be I'm the one at fault for being delusional, even though I haven't become this world's hero yet?

"I'm the Prime Minister of this kingdom, Rogue Solitaire."

The white-bearded old man, whose body was covered in a luxurious, silk-made, purple dress suit decorated with golden embroidery, gave us a bombastic welcome.

The other old man, with a pitch black, stern, unshaven face, wore a black mantle draped over the shoulders of his steel armor. I looked at this man, whose expression seemed to be nervous, as he threw a glance at us.

“I’m the head of the Imperial Guard Cavalry, and at the same time, the Commander of the Army designated for the extermination of the miasmatic mana hole, General Gail Dot Zeus.”

Sitting on his chair, it was an old man who seemed to be putting on airs as he threw out his chest.

Are? I wonder which one of these 2 is acting haughtier?

If I consider it calmly, I guess, it would be the Prime Minister.

Still, the Prime Minister, Rogue, came from a plebeian background and had a 2-character name, whereas, the General, Gail, was a noble with a 3-character name.

But, but, the Earl had said before that officials and nobles hold the same rank in this country, right?

“Sawatari Takeru-dono, the knight of the Almar household, today, we have summoned you for a special purpose.....”

As I took glimpses at both of their eminent looking faces, the old man Prime Minister spoke.

It was a Prime Minister’s duty to lead a conversation, so he was most likely doing a great job as one.

Otherwise it would cause a lot of a trouble if their partners were to

misunderstand their acts as curry favoring.

That was one of the important things in hierarchy when taking on a hackneyed country.

“...I’m sure you’re probably aware that the kingdom is right now at a loss in dealing with the miasmatic mana hole. Based on secretary Laertius’s report, you led an army against the monsters that invaded the territory of Est, and eventually, managed to protect it, at the same time exterminating the enemy. Is that right?”

The Prime Minister, Rogue spoke out to me in a calm voice.

That dignified attitude of his, which made others listen to him attentively and instinctively, is what one could expect from him as this country’s Prime Minister.

“By all means, we would like to have you lend that power of yours. General Gail is currently leading his army and pressing it toward the hole from the east side of here, but, we also would wish to have Takeru-dono’s army cooperate with us in driving away the monsters to the east.”

Saying so, the Prime Minister sent another glance at General Gail.

The general made a broad grin as if enjoying something, and started to talk after wondering if it was his turn.

“Sir Takeru, it appears you’ve managed to take down the fort belonging to the bandit group, Inuwashi, which the monsters had been occupying as their base,

right? Even our cavalry, which has been defending the road, couldn't capture that troublesome base."

Is this information the General had acquired through the Earl?

As expected of the leader of a cavalry, I didn't know what kind of a general he was, but, he could grasp a war situation well.

"I hear that you command small fries, such as soldiers made from slaves and villagers, however, now we're so busy, we'd even welcome the help of a cat. Therefore, it will be fine if you could lend us a reasonable amount of help."

Honestly, why does this conversation have to start from lending one's strength? Don't expect people to comply after just asking them for a help.

For some reason, this General is so proud, I can't bring myself to like him.

Even though they themselves were unable to take down the fort, I wonder if it's rude from them to call our side small fries.

As expected, even I, who was kind, couldn't avoid being pissed off.

"Prime Minister, your Excellency, please wait!"

Lyle-sensei, who had been silently listening, raised up a big voice.

"It should've been mentioned precisely in my report, but I remember telling

you about Takeru-dono taking down the monsters using the great strength of guns and cannons. And also, about the kingdom considering the implementation of the new weapons for extermination purposes.”

“As far as I’m concerned, we have already rejected your proposal.”

The Prime Minister, Rogue, replied immediately.

“However, only this way we can get out from this situat-“

“You’re repeating yourself, secretary Lyle! Currently, we do not wish to hear any opinion from you. Even for a mere secretary like you, it’s quite impertinent to meddle with a Prime Minister’s decision.”

Uwaa, he’s got on his high horses.

But well, this reaction was probably fit for a Prime Minister.

Even I, felt like I would prostrate myself in front of this person.

“This is an important discussion regarding how we should deal with the miasmatic mana hole. A petty official like you with such arrogance is in no position to suggest what is the best for protecting one’s citizens or eliminating the hole!”

However, without pulling back, Lyle-sensei objected.

Despite Sensei being usually kindhearted, I guess, even he knows when to speak when it's necessary.

"Hmph, you're just a youngster who's benefitted from your parent. Just because that person has done some deeds, how self-conceited can you be?!"

"Ughh..." – Sensei kept silent.

He looked incredibly vexed.

I can understand that feeling, as it's indeed harsh when having your parent being mentioned. Certainly, that Prime Minister is cruel.

You know, it's got nothing to do with one's parent!

At that time, General Gail cut in.

"Secretary, I've also read your report about that, but, don't the guns and cannons work the same as our bows and large-scale spells?"

"General, I'm sure you'll become convinced of the arms' effectiveness upon using them."

Sensei, who was bad at giving up, depended even on the General, but....

"I've already tested them, but, they have way too many weaknesses. The fuse of the arms won't light if they get soaked in the rain. And if they get drenched,

even that gunpowder will become useless.”

“About that, it’s fine as long we can figure out how to carry the weapons. Luckily, there’s not that much rain in this country, so it will be even more difficult for the weather to hinder our plans.”

The General got cocky and rasped under his nose at Sensei’s appeal.

“That’s why you’re a naive official who has no knowledge regarding battles. Even if we put cannons or guns on the battlefield, we’re done if there’s a high class mage on the enemy’s side who can wash them away.”

“But the enemy are monsters. Why should a high-class mage appear?”

At Sensei who asked that question with a sharp look, the General responded with a daring smile.

“You never know what could happen on the battlefield. Like if there’s a monster capable of using water spells. I see no reason for why we should bet on and invest a huge sum of money in something that will prove lethal due to its defect. You know, I’m the kind of a person that puts things in perspective.”

“General, at least let us test the arms once or twice!”

I could understand why Sensei was that persistent, but...

Those guys, were probably just mocking him.

“Oi, Secretary, try to think harder. There’s no way proud knights like us would resort to those weapons.”

“Then, how about we let the ordinary soldiers use them first?”

“We, knights, are in charge of directing battles. Something like an explosive gunpowder is good for those engineer fellows in the mines, but not for us, you see. There’s no soldier in this country crazy enough to bet other lives over those strange weapons.”

“Ugh....”

“Fuhahaa, it looks like you’ve finally understood that it’s impossible to order us, the knights, to use those toys.”

The General sneered again at Sensei, after saying so.

For some reason, this meeting felt very unpleasant.

‘If you can’t convince us any more than this, it’s better for you to retreat.’ – Sensei was even more silenced, after the Prime Minister stated this.

Well, then for what purpose did you call us?

So as to make Sensei a laughing stock?

I don’t know if these guys are big shots, but...

As one would have expected, I couldn't remain calm any longer.

"Prime Minister, is it fine for me to say something?!"

"Yes. After all, we are the ones who have requested cooperation from you. If there's something on your mind, ask."

"What will you do if, I manage to seal off that miasmatic mana hole using guns and cannons?"

General Gail bursted into an uncontrollable laughter.

"Fuhahahaaa, obviously, you'd then be considered as this country's hero and savior!"

The General held his stomach, and looked as if being about to fall from his chair. Prime Minister Rogue rebuked him with a grave expression.

"General, we're in the middle of a serious discussion right now."

"Hey hey, I was joking a bit, you know? The talk was so interesting it made me laugh."

'Cough.' – Once the Prime Minister glared at the General, he made a cough and carried on.

“Sir Takeru, we look forward to sealing off that miasmatic mana hole, therefore, we’d like to implore you, as well as the Asama Church who’s the only one capable of sealing off that hole, to help us. Even if you don’t succeed in sealing it, rest assured, as we shall reward you appropriately for your deeds.”

The Prime Minister was hard-headed when speaking, which made him give an impression of being easily understood.

Should I ask him something?

“Prime minister, what I want to ask is, whether or not you’d be willing to apologize to Secretary Lyle if he proves his point about the guns and cannons being effective?”

“I believe my decision, as this country’s Prime Minister, was justified. However, were that person to be able to seal off that hole and save this country.... this old aged me wouldn’t hesitate to do what he wishes, even if he was to cut me off or besmear me in the ground.”

The Prime Minister declared that clearly and loudly.

Heh? It looks like he’s well prepared. He probably doesn’t think we can do it.

I don’t know what kind of big shots those two are, but, I want them to atone for their crimes of disgracing Sensei’s good name.

Uhm, it’s not like I’m completely sure if we can manage to do it, but well.

Anyway, I decided to take up their request and joined the monster extermination force.

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“Ah, wait, wait, Sir Takeru.”

“...What could it be, General?”

Just when I thought our talk had finally concluded, I was stopped by the General’s challenge.

I’m not too keen on holding a discussion with this guy, but...

Even a General sounds eminent by its name, so I guess, it couldn’t be helped for me to react.

“How’s Louise been doing?”

“Wha? Why does General Gail know about Louise?”

Could it be he has researched this side that far?

For some reason, he’s an uncanny guy.

“Gufufufuu, I know everything about that girl. It seems like she’s fallen as low as to become an adventurer, but, the person named Louise Carlson was once a

considerable friend and coworker of mine who would compete with me for the seat of the leader of chivalry order, you see.”

“Heh? So there used to be times like this? Speaking of which, does that mean Louise used to serve the kingdom as a knight?”

“What? You don’t even know that....? Well, I guess, it’s not necessarily impossible for a person of doubtful origin not to know that. The household of Carlson has been considered as one of the greatest and most notable families for generations in Silesia. Their lineage is even greater than that of mine. What’s more, for her to have an impetuous dash towards acquiring new skills at such young age, it’s thanks to her deeds as a knight that she’s known as ‘Louise, the Myriad of Swords’ in the kingdom.”

“Heh? So she’s that famous?”

Louise wearing steel-made plated mail and riding on a horse, just imagining that was cool.

And then, General Gail sneered while making a broad grin, as if being extremely pleased with something.

“However, in the end, that girl was expelled from the order, for one particular mistake.”

“.....Did something happen?”

With an act-like attitude, the General stroked his beard with his fingers, and looked at me with a broad grin.

Indeed, he was an unpleasant guy.

“Fuhahahaa, that girl, Louise, brought shame upon her family, so she’s probably hiding that fact from her friends. If that’s the case, I, am willing to tell you everything about that.”

“You mean it?”

I guess, even this bearded face general has quite an unexpected side.

I felt a bit sorry for Louise, but I felt curious to learn more about her.

“That foolish girl, despite her skills and reputation, not to mention her noble background and rise to become a councilor of the chivalry, she committed a blunder for which she was disinherited and forced to leave the royal chivalry order.”

“That’s why, I’m asking you what kind of blunder did she commit?”

Just go straight to the point, you annoying general.

You’re way beating over the bush, so tell me quickly.

“Fine, I shall tell you. There can be nothing else than that huge failure in which they failed to seal off the miasmatic mana hole. The troops from the chivalric order, which she led for extermination of monsters, were completely annihilated due to that foolish girl’s foolish failure.”

“So it was because of Louise?”

As I asked so, the beard faced old man smirked at me again.

“Of course. It’s because of that girl’s failure, that we, the Chivalric Order, are still being troubled. They were annihilated, all destroyed! Still, to be able to survive alone, that girl did really well. I guess, despite being called a knight, her feminine body doesn’t necessarily know the meaning of shame.”

“I see....”

I didn’t know Louise’s circumstances in detail, but, it was certain her failure was considered as fact.

Is this the reason why she told us not to come close to the miasmatic mana hole?

I could now broadly grasp why she was so against coming, despite me trying to persuade her.

“Sir Takeru, you don’t look like a person that will rise into becoming an influential official. It appears that that girl, Louise, is still in charge of directing battles behind the curtain. Even though she was expelled from the chivalric order, I must admit she has some guts worthy of respect for not giving up.”

“Well, I guess it’s as you say.”

It would be unexpected for her not to be strong-willed, but, there were also some parts of her that couldn't be helped.

Still, it was fact that Louise excelled more in fighting strength than me.

“Hmph, now that I’ve become the leader of the Royal Chivalric Order, and on top of that, a General, I can only consider that failure of a knight as a bug. Still, tell her she did a good job in crawling to some other place and doing her best. That’s because she would experience nothing but the shame of being laughed off by her old comrades, were she to return here nonchalantly. Fuhahahahahahaaa!”

Talking at his own convenience while laughing, the general left.

Uwaa, indeed, he’s a guy with a bad personality.

I guess, people like him are those stereotypical villains.

It would be nice if he could just die from being stabbed from behind.

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The royal capital was royal in name only. Its castle and walls were splendid, however, as soon as you walked a bit onto side roads branching from their main one, you could witness a disastrous scenery filled with beggars and refugees.

I also saw lots of people who collapsed in the street dying, as a result of widespread crime here.

Most likely, it was due to a large number of soldiers being occupied with fighting the monsters, which is why there's a lack in garrison responsible for protecting this city's order.

Did everyone grow emotionless? Despite there being corpses rolling on the floor, nobody seemed to pay any notice. Has this country become a battlefield?

I want return back to the peaceful territory of Est.

I've already lost my interest in this city's fashionable cafe for nobilities, of which I heard lots of good things from the Earl.

It would be strange if there was any nobility watching the city and drinking coffee buoyantly under these circumstances.

Even if I wasn't Louise, I could understand her feelings of not wanting to visit this place.

For the time being, I checked on this city's market and managed to sell all the soaps, loaded on my covered wagon, at the highest price possible.

Since there were no traders coming to this city at the moment, the citizens couldn't tell what was considered a reasonable price.

Still, as expected of this royal capital, it was abundant with a variety of goods.

Having lots of money, which I had brought with me, I proceeded to buy up

antidotes, recovery potions, and precious miracle drugs here.

I didn't know what would become of this city, but I knew I could screw up its economy badly.

Did nobody expect traders coming to this city? The prices at the market were awfully high.

It was a city with a collapsed order and morality.

"Takeru-dono, I apologize for this uncouth sight. To think this city would become like this...."

Back when we were in the castle, I tried to avoid any talk regarding that topic, however.... I was interrupted by Sensei and suddenly apologized to in the middle of buying up items from the oldest and most well-known stores in this capital.

Sensei, please don't make such a sad expression.

"You're not the one to be at fault, Sensei. Hey look, I've purchased lots of magic items. In addition to that, how about we buy magic jewels and gear up for the upcoming battles?"

"Ah no, it's fine by me. More importantly, Takeru-dono, how about you purchase those protectors? I think you have enough offensive power, but you should also consider increasing your defense."

“Then, which one would you recommend me, Sensei?”

“They quite vary in price, but, how about you purchase this mithril cap?”

The price for the cap was in Silesian platinum coins, that’s to say 100....

Uwaaa, not 100 golden coins, but 100 platinum ones?!

It was a price which I thought to be a joke.

In Japanese currency, wouldn’t it be around 10 million yen?

The shop owner wasn’t willing to take out the cap from its glass case, but, after somehow convincing him with an earnest request, I was allowed to touch this smooth, skin and silk-like cap, which was so light it didn’t seem to be made from metal.

This is the real deal. As expected from a magic metal.

“It’s probably amazing. The cap has its price as well, but, I bet it must be hugely effective. After all, it’s made from a legendary rare metal casted with magic. It’s also said to be proof against a dragon’s breath and fangs. What’s more, you won’t find this anywhere outside the capital.”

“I guess, we’ll need at least this much equipment if we want to seal off that hole, right?”

Lyle-sensei nodded in agreement with a bit of a lonesome face.

Then, it's decided we'll buy this cap.

I've been totally encouraged by sellers who tried to make a turnover by telling me to buy anything and everything, but, when it comes to Sensei's opinion, nothing has gone wrong till now.

If it's about powerful armors, I'd also like to have Louise and the rest use some.

Upon seeing a youngster like me, the seller doubted if I could really afford to buy this cap. It was amusing to watch him, whose eyes changed color and expression turned stiff from astonishment, as I presented him 100 platinum coins.

Purchasing expensive items is one way of releasing your stress, you know?

"Thank you very much!"

We were suddenly seen off by a now courteous shop owner. As soon as we left the place, the shop temporarily closed, which made both me and Lyle-sensei look at each other and laugh.

Certainly, the shop owner must have brought the bag of platinum coins with him to a bank. I could somewhat understand his feelings.

Later, as we finished buying various things here, we left this disastrous city

behind with a fast pace.

Apart from shopping here, we had no other business to do in this terribly detestable city.

That's because we had already accepted a formal request from the Kingdom of Silesia.

From now on, our plan of capturing the miasmatic mana hole commenced more and more.

'Will we manage to live through this war?' – Pondering over that, I became anxious.